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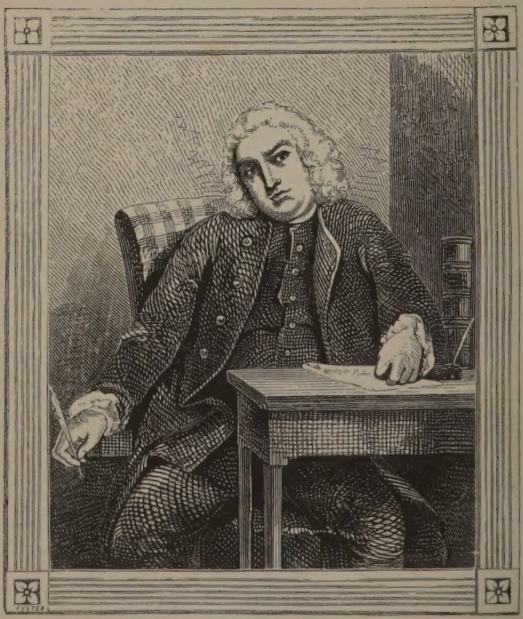

Samuel Johnson.

LIFE

OF

SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.

BY REV. C. ADAMS, D.D.

ILLUSTRATED.

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TO THE

YOUNG MEN OF THIS GREAT COUNTRY;

ESPECIALLY TO SUCH AS,

AMID POVERTY, DISEASE, AND OTHER UNTOWARD CIRCUMSTANCES,

ARE STRUGGLING FOR EXCELLENT SCHOLARSHIP,

EMINENT LITERARY ATTAINMENTS,

A NOBLE CHARACTER, AND A VIRTUOUS FAME,

This Volume

IS PRAYERFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

PREFACE.

To the author of this book it has long seemed that a plain, straightforward story of SAMUEL JOHNSON would supply a desideratum in the literature appropriate to the youth of this country It is true, we have his biography drawn up for us by a master hand, and with a minuteness and fullness touching certain periods of the great moralist's life that is without precedent or example in biographical literature. At the same time it must be admitted that the great work of Mr. Boswell, connected and blended as it is with those of several other authors, presents us with a mixed and partially-confused picture, which, with all its minuteness of detail and fidelity of delineation, can hardly fail to weary the youthful eye, and prejudice the interest which should attend the contemplation of a character like that of Johnson. In the work alluded to we are confronted with a huge mass of materials, comprising his-

tory, politics, religion, discussions, talks, anecdotes, travels, letters, criticism, and casuistry, all variously and curiously mingled, and amid which the principal hero is revealed to us, it is true, in divers interesting aspects. Yet, as he ever looms up before us—the prominent figure of the panorama—an endless multitude of other characters, topics, and features crowd themselves upon the vision, and, to a greater or less extent, distract the attention, and diffuse a partial mistiness over the entire scene.

If all this be so, is the presentation of a judicious and careful selection from out of this curious conglomeration of materials, thereby setting forth in graceful outline, and with a somewhat adequate variety and fullness of view, and robed, withal, in simple and becoming dress, the portrait of so eminent and illustrious a man as Johnson, an unworthy or mistaken idea?

Such an idea is what is attempted to be embodied in the production hereby presented to the youthful reader; and presented not without hope of the approbation of a virtuous, intelligent, and candid public.

Illinois Female College, *April*, 1869.

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Parlor of House in which Johnson was born.

LIFE

OF

SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.

CHAPTER I.

SAMUEL JOHNSON was born at Lichfield, England, September 18, 1709. His father was Michael Johnson, of obscure birth, and was settled in Lichfield as a bookseller and stationer. Both of his parents were somewhat advanced at the time of their marriage. Hence only two children were born to them: Samuel, the illustrious subject of this sketch, and Nathaniel, who died at the early age of twenty-five.

Not much is recorded of the father of Samuel Johnson. He seems to have been for a time successful in his business, yet afterward lost

MICHAEL JOHNSON.

most of his property, and declined into straitened circumstances. The son writes as follows of his parents:

"My father and mother had not much happiness from each other. She had no value for his relations; those, indeed, whom we knew of were much lower than hers. This contempt began, I know not on which side, very early; but, as my father was little at home, it had not much effect. They seldom conversed, for my father could not bear to talk of his affairs; and my mother, *being unacquainted with books*, cared not to talk of any thing else. . . . Of business she had no distinct conception; and, therefore, her discourse was composed only of complaint, fear, and suspicion. Neither of them ever tried to calculate the profits of trade, or the expenses of living. My

mother concluded that we were poor, because we lost by some of our trades; but the truth was that my father, having, in the early part of his life, contracted debts, never had trade sufficient to enable him to pay them and to maintain his family." *

MRS. JOHNSON.

* A romantic incident of the father, Michael Johnson, seems to be well authenticated. "A young woman of Leek, in Staffordshire, while he served his apprenticeship there, conceived a violent passion for him; and though it met with no favorable return, followed him to Lichfield, where she took lodgings opposite to the house in which he lived, and indulged her hopeless flame. When he was informed that it so preyed upon her mind that her life was in danger, he, with a generous humanity, went to her and offered to marry her, but it was then too late. Her vital power was exhausted, and she actually exhibited one of the very rare instances of dying for love. She was buried in the Cathedral of Lichfield; and he, with a tender regard, placed a stone over her grave."

Thus Samuel Johnson was a poor boy, though in very early life he gave evidence of that independence of spirit, and some other traits of character, by which he was so much distinguished in subsequent life. At four years old, "one day when the servant, who used to be sent to school to conduct him home, had not come in time, he set out by himself, though he was then so near-sighted that he was obliged to stoop down on his hands and knees to take a view of the kennel before he ventured to step over it. His schoolmistress, afraid that he might miss his way, or fall into the kennel, or be run over by a cart, followed him at some distance. He happened to turn about and perceive her, and feeling her careful attention as an insult to his manliness, he ran back to her in a rage, and beat her as well as his strength would permit." *

This defect in his vision seems to have been caused by scrofula, which he is said to

* A doubtful story. All this is too much for a boy of four years.

have contracted from his nurse; from whom, after ten weeks, he was taken home a poor diseased infant, and almost blind. His mother, yielding to the superstitious notion so long prevalent that a *royal contact* would heal this malady, brought him to Queen Anne, whose touch, however, failed to benefit him. "I was taken to London," he says, "to be touched for the evil by Queen Anne. I always retained some memory of this journey, though I was then but thirty months old."

Samuel's first teacher was a Mrs. Oliver; a widow lady who taught a school for young children in Lichfield. This lady, when, a dozen years afterward, he was starting for Oxford University, came to take leave of him, brought him, in her simplicity, a present of gingerbread, and told him he was the best scholar she ever had. The memory of this early compliment always delighted him; and, in after years, he was wont to say that "this was as high a proof of his merit as he could conceive."

LICHFIELD SCHOOL.

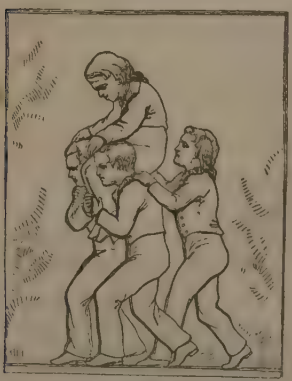
At about ten years of age he began the study of Latin with Mr. Hawkins, a subordinate teacher of Lichfield School, which school was very respectable in its time. As he advanced, he came under the tutorship of the master of the school, Mr. Hunter. This Hunter, though a capital teacher, seems to have been terribly severe withal; beating his pupils unmercifully, and punishing them equally for not knowing a thing as for neglecting to acquire it. Yet Johnson was always aware how much he owed

to Mr. Hunter. A friend one day asked him "how he had acquired so accurate a knowledge of Latin," in which he was exceeded by no man of his time. He answered, "My master whipped me very well. Without that, sir, I should have done nothing." He added, that "while Hunter was flogging his boys unmercifully, he used to say, 'and this I do to save you from the gallows.'" *

The intellectual superiority of Samuel Johnson was perceived and acknowledged from his earliest years. There seems to have been no dispute or contest here; but the case was as clear as "the superiority of stature in some men above others." One of his schoolmates at this time states that he never knew him corrected at school but for talking, and diverting other boys from their business. He seemed

* Dr. Johnson seems to have always approved the rod for the correction of children. "I would rather," said he, "have the rod to be the general terror to all, to make them learn, than tell a child, 'If you do thus or thus you will be more esteemed than your brothers or sisters.'" Ay; but is there no third way, and superior to either of the others?

to learn by intuition; for though indolence and procrastination were inherent in his constitution, whenever he made an exertion he did more than any one else. In short, he is a memorable instance of what has been often observed, that "the boy is the man in miniature;" and that the distinguishing characteristics of each individual are the same through the whole course of life. His favorites used to receive very liberal assistance from him; and such was the submission and deference with which he was treated, such the desire to obtain his regard, that three of the boys used to come in the morning as his humble attendants, and carry him to school. One in the middle stooped while he sat upon his back, and one on each side supported him, and thus he was borne triumphant. Such a



BEARING JOHNSON TO SCHOOL.

predominance of intellectual vigor is very remarkable, and does honor to human nature." *

"He discovered a great ambition to excel, which roused him to counteract his indolence. He was uncommonly inquisitive; and his memory was so tenacious that he never forgot any thing that he either heard or read. Mr. Hector, one of his schoolmates, remembered having recited to him eighteen verses, which, after a little pause, he repeated *verbatim*—varying only one epithet, by which he improved the line."

"He never joined with the other boys in their ordinary diversions. His only amusement was in winter; when he took a pleasure in being drawn barefooted upon the ice by a boy who pulled him along by a garter fixed round him; no very easy operation, as his size was remarkably large."

As to his reading, at this period of his boy-

* "Intellectual vigor" is truly of great influence; but it is not absurd to suppose that some other kind of vigor in the boy Johnson might have induced such a ridiculous obsequiousness.

hood, Johnson is said to have been immoderately fond of romances, which fondness he retained through life; and it was to this sort of reading that he attributed that "unsettled turn of mind which prevented his ever fixing in any profession." Will the youthful reader make a note of this?

We find Johnson in the Lichfield school until about sixteen years of age, when he was transferred to a school at Stourbridge, where he passed a little more than a year, but without realizing so much benefit as was expected. Alluding to his progress at the two schools, he thus discriminated: "At one (Lichfield) I learned much in the school, but little from the master; in the other I learned much from the master, but little in the school."

The two subsequent years—from seventeen to nineteen—he was at home. Of this interesting period of his life we have the following notice:

"The two years which he spent at home, after his return from Stourbridge, he passed in

what he thought idleness, and was scolded by his father for his want of steady application. He had no settled plan of life, nor looked forward at all, but merely lived from day to day. Yet he read a great deal in a desultory manner, without any scheme of study, as chance threw books in his way, and inclination directed him through them. He used to mention one curious instance of his casual reading when but a boy. Having imagined that his brother had hid some apples behind a large folio upon an upper shelf in his father's shop, he climbed up to search for them. There were no apples, but the large folio proved to be Petrarch, whom he had seen mentioned in some preface as one of the restorers of learning. His curiosity having been thus excited, he sat down with avidity and read a great part of the book. What he read during these two years was not works of mere amusement—not voyages and travels, as he said, 'but all literature, all ancient writers, all manly.' In this irregular manner I had looked into a great many books which

were not commonly known at the Universities, where they seldom read any books but what are put into their hands by their tutors; so that when I came to Oxford, Dr. Adams, now Master of Pembroke College, told me that I was the best qualified for the University that he had ever known come there."

CHAPTER II.

OCTOBER 31, 1728, and in his nineteenth year, Samuel Johnson was entered at Pembroke Col-

PEMBROKE COLLEGE GATEWAY.

lege, Oxford University. A gentleman, Mr. Corbett, entered at the same time a son who

had been educated in the same school with Johnson; and it was proposed that the latter should attend young Corbett as an assistant in his studies, and thus receive as compensation his own support at the University.

Johnson's father accompanied him to Oxford; and, as he introduced his boy to the tutors and others, he "seemed very full of the merits of his son," and told the company he was a good scholar and a poet, and wrote Latin verses. His figure and manner appeared strange to them, but he behaved modestly, and sat silent, till, upon something which occurred in the course of conversation, he suddenly struck in and quoted Macrobius;* and thus he gave the first impression of that more extensive reading in which he had indulged himself."

Johnson's tutor seems not to have been a man of such abilities as were adequate or satisfactory to his new pupil; and the latter would often risk the payment of a small fine rather

* A Latin author, who lived in the fifth century of the Christian era.

than attend the lectures of his tutor. Hence, on one occasion of being fined he says to his teacher, "Sir, you have sconced me two pence for non-attendance at a lecture not worth one penny." In alluding afterward to this college tutor of his, he says of him, "He was a very worthy man, but a heavy man, and I did not profit much by his instructions; indeed, I did not attend him much. The first day after I came to college I waited upon him, and then stayed away four. On the sixth, Mr. Jordan (the tutor) asked me why I had not attended. I answered I had been sliding in Christ Church meadow. And this I said with as much *nonchalance* as I am now talking to you. I had no notion that I was wrong, or irreverent to my tutor." But he afterward declared it to be "stark insensibility."*

Yet he seems to have entertained a positive

* All this needs to be guarded. It was characteristic of Dr. Johnson to overstate his defects, whether literary or moral. Dr. Adams, Master of the College where Johnson was entered, assured Mr. Boswell that he attended his tutor's lectures, and other lectures of the College, "very regularly."

love and respect for this tutor, "not for his literature, but for his worth." "Whenever," said he, "a young man becomes Jordan's pupil he becomes his son."

Mr. Jordan having noticed one or two specimens of his pupil's poetical powers, requested him to translate Pope's Messiah into Latin verse as a Christmas exercise. He performed it with uncommon rapidity, and in so masterly a manner that he obtained great applause from it, which ever after kept him high in the estimation of his college, and, indeed, of all the University."*

About a year after entering college Johnson began to be afflicted more deeply than before with a certain "morbid melancholy," which seems to have been constitutional with him. He not unfrequently felt himself "overwhelmed with a horrible hypochondria, with perpetual irritation, fretfulness, and impatience; and with

* This translation, it is said, was shown to Pope himself, who, having read it, returned it with this splendid encomium, "The writer of this poem will leave it a question for posterity whether his or mine be the original."

a dejection, gloom, and despair which made existence misery. From this dismal malady he never afterward was perfectly relieved; and all his labors, and all his enjoyments, were but temporary interruptions of its baleful influence." *

Johnson at first endeavored to overcome this terrible disorder by forcible exertions. He took long walks, and tried other expedients; but all in vain. It is pleasant to reflect that amid all his suffering from this source his intellect remained always unclouded and vigorous. "Though he suffered severely from it, he was not, therefore, degraded. The powers of his great mind might be troubled, and their full

* Let the young reader note this carefully, and receive instruction. Here is a man of transcendent abilities, towering head and shoulders above ordinary mortals, yet carrying with him a life-long affliction of such a character that, so far as worldly happiness is concerned, he might gladly have exchanged his wonderful powers for relief from such an incubus. So the great Apostle received sublime revelations, but the "thorn in the flesh" must accompany them; and the great Dispenser sets one thing over against another, to the end that "man may find nothing after him."

exercise suspended, at times; but the mind itself was ever entire." Further on the same writer adds, "Amidst the oppression and distraction of a disease which very few have felt in its full extent, but many have experienced in a lighter degree, Johnson, in his writings and in his conversation, never failed to display all the varieties of intellectual excellence."

Johnson's youthful mind was early directed to religion. His mother was a religious woman, and was interested for the spiritual welfare of her son. Yet it does not appear that all her efforts for this object were of the most judicious character. As he grew up into youth, he, like thousands of other young people, acquired the habit of neglecting public worship; became, as he says, "a sort of lax *talker* against religion, for I did not much *think* against it; and this lasted till I went to Oxford, where it would not be suffered."

After entering college, however, he began to give more serious attention to religious things. A perusal of Law's "Serious Call to a

Holy Life"* seems to have first led his mind to earnest meditation upon religion, and from this time it became the predominant object of his thoughts.

Some additional notices of Johnson's college life are furnished us by Boswell and other writers. It appears that his particular courses of reading while at the University cannot be satisfactorily traced. He seems to have had but a slight taste for mathematics or the physical sciences, while his pecuniary circumstances were such as seemed to exclude him from the learned professions. Hence his modes of reading and study were more or less irregular, and his habits desultory. At the same time, from

* A book well adapted to induce thoughtfulness and seriousness, and to impress the mind with the vanity of this world and the infinite superiority of eternal things. But it fails to present to the inquirer Christ, mercy, pardon, renewal, salvation, and the rejoicing of hope. "Law" is good, but we need Gospel also. Johnson read the "Serious Call," and his life-long religion was much seriousness and little hope. His contemporaries, the Wesleys, read the same book, and in the same University, and with the same effect until, like Apollos, they were taught the way of the Lord more perfectly; and then they were lifted aloft in the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

certain early notes of his, there is evidence that at various times he planned a methodical course of study, whether such a course were executed or not. At all events, it seems to be certain that Johnson, while in college, was a great reader, and this habit, acquired in early life, must have continued into riper years. Adam Smith, as quoted by Boswell, stated that "Johnson knew more books than any man alive." "He had a peculiar facility in seizing at once what was valuable in any book, without submitting to the labor of perusing it from beginning to end." Hence he is said to have rarely read a book thoroughly.

With all his eccentricities Johnson was, of course, popular among his fellow-students. Though depressed by poverty and irritated by disease, he was, nevertheless "a gay and frolicsome fellow," and maintained a genial and lively exterior.* All accounts agree, however, that

* "Ah, sir," he says to Boswell, "I was mad and violent. It was bitterness which they mistook for frolic. I was miserably poor, and I thought to fight my way by my literature and my wit, so I disregarded all power and all authority."

he must have been a trial to the authorities of his college. "He was generally seen lounging at the college-gate, with a circle of young students around him, whom he was entertaining with wit and keeping from their studies, if not stirring them up to rebellion against the college discipline, which, in his maturer years, he so much extolled." *

It is painful to contemplate that a youth like Samuel Johnson should be compelled by poverty to relinquish the advantage of a complete academical education. The friend (Mr. Corbett) whom he had trusted for support had deceived him. His debts in college, though not great, were increasing, and his scanty remittances from Lichfield, which all along had been made with great difficulty, could be supplied no longer, his father having fallen into a state of insolvency. "Compelled, therefore, by irresistible necessity, he left the college in

* Yet Johnson's record in college could not have been the meanest. Dr. Adams, who seems to have been his tutor during a part of his stay in college, remarked of him many years afterward, "I was his nominal tutor, but he was above my mark."

autumn, 1731, without a degree, having been a member of it little more than three years." *

Johnson now returned finally to his native city, Lichfield; returned poor, and without knowing how he was to secure a livelihood. His father had become insolvent, and died in December of this same year. One hundred dollars fell to him at his father's decease, and in July following he made this entry in his diary: "I now see that I must make my own fortune. Meanwhile, let me take care that the powers of my mind be not debilitated by poverty, and that indigence do not force me into any criminal act."

This was well said, and worthy of a strong young man of twenty-two years of age, and possessing a brave and true heart.

* This last statement seems to be imperfect, as by repeated and protracted absences Johnson was actually in college much less than three years.

CHAPTER III.

Thus we find Samuel Johnson as he is about commencing the world. He is of age, has just buried his father, who has left him but a slight pittance, and he is thrown upon his own resources. Yet these are neither few nor mean. He has tolerable health, splendid abilities, good education, a very considerable knowledge of books, and much general intelligence. It further appears that he is in good repute in his native town, and has access to the best families of the city, thus contradicting the notion that he was never, until maturer years, familiar with genteel and good society.

His first effort at bettering his circumstances seems to have been the acceptance of a situation as usher, or subordinate teacher, of a school in Leicestershire. This position, however, was from the first entirely distasteful to

him. "One day contains the whole of my life," is his expression for the dull sameness of his daily duties. He pronounced it "as unvaried as the cuckoo's note;" and "he did not know whether it was more disagreeable for him to teach or the boys to learn." Providence had evidently not designed Samuel Johnson for a school teacher.

Added to Johnson's aversion to teaching, which rendered it but a painful drudgery, was an unhappy disagreement which arose between him and the patron of the school, by whom he seems to have been treated with great harshness. Thus, after several months of suffering, he relinquished a situation "which, all his life afterward, he recollected with the strongest aversion, and even a degree of horror."

The succeeding six months Johnson, by invitation, spent at Birmingham with Mr. Hector, one of the schoolmates of his boyhood, and who seems to have always cherished for him the highest respect. Here seems to have opened obscurely with him the literary career which

subsequently grew to be so illustrious and successful. His first efforts were in the shape of a series of periodical essays, which he was employed to write for a newspaper of which a Mr. Warren was proprietor, and for which he probably received some pecuniary consideration. He also translated and abridged for Mr. Warren a French book entitled "A Voyage to Abyssinia," which was published, and for which he received the prodigious sum of five guineas!

Early the next year (1734) Johnson returned to Lichfield, his native town, and in August of that year, as an attempt to procure subsistence, he issued proposals for printing, by subscription, the later poems of Politian.* But the number of subscribers was not sufficient to authorize him to proceed, and the work never appeared, if, indeed, the manuscript was ever prepared.

* An eminent Italian scholar and poet, who stood at the head of the Italian scholars that contributed to the revival of learning. He died at Florence, 1494.

Returning, about this time, to Birmingham, he proposed to Mr. Cave, editor of the Gentleman's Magazine, to furnish him some literary assistance for the improvement of that publication. It is not known that this proposal resulted in any thing.

EDWARD CAVE.

Also, about the same time, one of his old friends solicited for him the mastership of a school in Warwickshire. This, too, was a failure, as will appear from the response to the letter of solicitation, a part of which is as follows:

"SIR: I was favoured with yours of y^e^ 13th inst. in due time; but deferred answering it til now, it takeing up some time to informe the ffoeofees* [of the school] of the contents thereof;

* Corporate Trustees.

and before they would return an answer, desired some time to make enquiry of y^e^ caracter of Mr. Johnson ; who all agree that he is an excellent scholar, and upon that account deserves much better than to be the schoolmaster of Solihull. But then he has the caracter of being a very haughty, ill-natured gent, and y^t^ he has such a way of distorting his fface (w^h^ though he can't help) y^e^ gent. think it may effect some young ladds ; for these two reasons he is not approved on."

For similar reasons he also failed to obtain the situation of assistant teacher in a school at Brewood. The master, Mr. Budworth, lamented the necessity of declining to engage him "from an apprehension that the paralytic affection under which Johnson labored through life might become the object of imitation or ridicule among his pupils."

In the midst of all these discouragements, and notwithstanding his destitute circumstances, Johnson suddenly plunged into matrimony.

He married a widow lady, Mrs. Porter, who was full twenty years his senior.*

It appears that their ride to the church to be married was performed on horseback; and from Johnson himself we have the following sketch of the journey:

"She had read the old romances, and had got into her head the fantastical notion that a woman of spirit should use her lover like a dog. So, sir, at first she told me that I rode too fast, and that she could not keep up with me; and, when I rode a little slower, she passed me, and complained that I lagged behind. I was not to be made the slave of caprice, and I resolved to begin as I meant to end. I, therefore, pushed on briskly, till I was fairly out of her sight. The road lay between two hedges, so I was sure she could not miss it; and I con-

*Johnson became the fervent admirer of Mrs. Porter soon after her husband's death; while on her part, she is said to have been so much charmed by his conversation that she overlooked all external disadvantages, and said to her daughter, "This is the most sensible man that I ever saw in my life."

trived that she should not soon come up with me. When she did, I observed her to be in tears."

"A singular beginning," says Boswell, "of connubial felicity. But there is no doubt that Johnson, though he thus showed a manly firmness, proved a most affectionate and indulgent husband to the last moment of Mrs. Johnson's life." The marriage occurred on the 9th of July, 1736, the bridegroom and bride being respectively twenty-seven and forty-seven years of age.

CHAPTER IV.

IMMEDIATELY after his marriage Johnson attempted to establish a private academy in the neighborhood of his native city, and in the Gentleman's Magazine for 1736 appears the following advertisement:

"At Edial, near Lichfield, in Staffordshire, young gentlemen are boarded and taught the Latin and Greek languages, by Samuel Johnson."

Three pupils only, one of whom was the celebrated David Garrick, were placed under his care, and the school survived but about a year and a half. "As yet his name had nothing of that celebrity which afterward commanded the highest attention and respect of mankind. Had such an advertisement appeared after the publication of his 'London,' or his 'Rambler,' or his 'Dictionary,' how it would have burst upon the world! With what eagerness would the great and the wealthy have embraced an

opportunity of putting their sons under the learned tuition of Samuel Johnson! The truth, however, is, that he was not so well qualified for being a teacher of elements, and a conductor in learning by regular gradations, as men of inferior powers of mind." * "While we acknowledge the justness of Thomson's beautiful remark,

> 'Delightful task! to rear the tender thought,
> To teach the young idea how to shoot!'

we must consider that this delight is perceptible only by a mind at ease, a mind at once calm and clear; but that a mind gloomy and impetuous, like that of Johnson, cannot be fixed for any length of time in minute attention, and must be so frequently irritated by unavoidable slowness and error in the advances of

* To some all this may appear paradoxical, while yet it is often realized as true. A clear perception of the pupil's wants, joined with a profound sympathy with his difficulties, and a patience and perseverance that will accompany him from step to step up the multitudinous grades of progress, all combined with strong and undying benevolence—such are the essential qualities of a true teacher; and some of these were lacking in Johnson with all his greatness, and, perhaps, in consequence of that greatness.

scholars, as to perform the duty with little pleasure to the teacher, and no great advantage to the pupils. Good temper is a most essential requisite in a preceptor."

During the existence of the school Johnson commenced his tragedy, *Irene;* and early in March, 1737, at twenty-eight years of age, he determined to try his fortune in London, as presenting a more ample and inviting field for effort and success in a literary life. His pupil, David Garrick, accompanied him with a view of completing his education for the profession of Law. On this, his first visit to London, Johnson seems to have left his wife at Lichfield. His purse was slender, yet he knew how to live cheaply. He took private lodgings, and obtained his meals at what would now be termed a restaurant. "I dined very well," he says, "for eightpence, with very good company, at the Pine-Apple in New-street, just by.* Several

* He seems not always to have fared so well, for he afterward asserted to a friend that for a considerable time he subsisted upon the scanty pittance of six and a quarter cents a day.

of them had traveled. They expected to meet every day, but did not know one another's names. It used to cost the rest a shilling, for they drank wine; but I had a cut of meat for sixpence and bread for a penny, and gave the waiter a penny, so that I was quite well served; nay, better than the rest, for they gave the waiter nothing."

Thus Johnson's life in London was, for the present, a life of obscurity, there being but a family or two of any distinction to which he enjoyed access. One of these was that of Mr. Henry Hervey, at whose house he was frequently entertained, and had opportunity of meeting genteel company. During this time he seems to have prosecuted his tragedy, *Irene*. He also proposed to a publisher a new English translation of the History of the Council of Trent,* together with notes from a French translation of the same work.

* This famous Council was convoked by Pope Paul III. in 1545, and closed, after numerous interruptions, in 1563. Its professed object was to reform ecclesiastical abuses, but its real purpose was to counteract and crush the Reformation.

After three or four months' absence Johnson returned home to Lichfield, where he finished his tragedy, *Irene.* At the end of three months more he returned to London, accompanied this time by Mrs. Johnson. They took lodgings in Woodstock-street; but what was their manner of living at this period does not clearly appear. He at once endeavored to bring upon the stage his tragedy, but could find no managers that would accept it; nor was it brought forward until a dozen years afterward, when his friend, David Garrick, produced it. He soon became a regular contributor to the Gentleman's Magazine, under the editorship of Mr. Edward Cave, and his admirable essays contributed greatly to the celebrity of that periodical, and seem to have secured to their author a tolerable livelihood.

"Thus was Johnson employed during some of the best years of his life as a mere literary laborer—'for gain, not glory'—solely to obtain an honest support." "But what first displayed his transcendent powers, and gave the world

Lichfield in 1730.

assurance of the man, was his 'London,' a poem in imitation of the Third Satire of Juvenal; which came out in May, this year, and burst forth with a splendor the rays of which will forever encircle his name."

It is said that Johnson offered this poem to several London booksellers, none of whom would purchase it. But Mr. Robert Dodsley had the capacity to discern the singular merit of the poem, and at once bargained for the copyright, for which he paid the author ten guineas.

ROBERT DODSLEY.

This poem seems to have been a success, and attracted much attention and admiration. At Oxford every body was delighted with it, and pronounced the unknown author "greater even than Pope." General Oglethorpe, a man eminent for learning and taste, was one of the

warmest patrons of the poem, and Pope himself approved it. "The whole of the poem," writes Boswell, "is eminently excellent; and there are in it such proofs of a knowledge of the world, and of a mature acquaintance with life, as cannot be contemplated without wonder, when we consider that he was then only in his twenty-ninth year, and had yet been so little in the busy haunts of men."

Thus Johnson began to arise into fame. Yet he "felt the hardships of writing for bread." Hence he reluctantly turned his attention again to the idea of teaching, with a view of securing a sure though modest income for life. Accordingly, an offer of the mastership of a school was made to him provided he could procure the degree of Master of Arts. Application was made by some friends to Oxford, and also to Dublin, in both cases without success. "It was, perhaps, no small disappointment to Johnson that this respectable application had not the desired effect; yet how much reason has there been, both for himself and his country,

to rejoice that it did not succeed; as he might probably have wasted in obscurity those hours in which he afterward produced his incomparable works."

It appears that, about this time, he also seriously considered the question of entering the profession of law. The drudgery of authorship, it would seem, had already become irksome to him, and he longed to escape from it to something more congenial as well as more profitable. "I am," he says to Dr. Adams, "a total stranger to these studies, but whatever is a profession, and maintains numbers, must be within the reach of common abilities, and some degree of industry." It was the opinion of his friends that could he have entered the profession of law he would certainly have risen to great eminence; "for," says Dr. Adams, "he would have brought to his profession a rich store of various knowledge, an uncommon acuteness, and a command of language in which few could have equaled, and none have surpassed him." But at the door of the law, as

well as of school keeping, stood the same impassable barrier, the want of a Master's degree.*

* All this sounds strangely to us who are accustomed to observe the freedom with which academic degrees are now conferred, especially in our own country. Here is a man who spent three years in Oxford University, and was distinguished there, but whom poverty compelled to retire without his first degree; who had spent ten years subsequently in literary pursuits; had acquired literary fame that had reached to Oxford itself; and yet it seemed too much to tender to this talented but indigent scholar the moderate honor of Master of Arts.

CHAPTER V.

THUS we see that Johnson was driven by stern necessity to persevere in the drudgery of writing, and writing for bread.

His connection with the Gentleman's Magazine seems to have been decidedly advantageous to that enterprise, contributing greatly to its attractiveness and popularity. For three years, about this period, he sustained the department of "Parliamentary Debates" in that magazine. This department seems to have been managed in the curious manner following. It appears that Mr. Cave, the editor, had an understanding with the door-keepers of Parliament, so that himself, and persons under his employ, gained admittance to the galleries, and listened to the discussions of the members. "They brought away," says Johnson, "the subject of discussion, the names of the speakers, the sides they took, and the order in which

they rose, together with notes of the arguments advanced in the course of the debate. The whole was afterward communicated to me, and I composed the speeches in the form which they now have in the Parliamentary Debates."

Such was the process, as detailed by Johnson himself, of producing, or rather of manufacturing, the parliamentary speeches. Of course, in the hands of an artist like Johnson, these speeches, as they appeared in the Magazine, would assume oftentimes a shape much superior to that in which they were originally delivered.

Strange to say, this process does not seem to have been generally understood, even among the more intelligent. Thus, in a certain company of gentlemen and scholars at which Johnson was present, a speech of Mr. Pitt was the subject of conversation. One of the party, Dr. Francis, remarked that the said speech was the best he had ever read. He added that he had employed eight years of his life in the study of Demosthenes, and finished a translation of that celebrated orator, with all the decorations of

style and language within the reach of his capacity; but he had met with nothing equal to the speech above mentioned. Many others of the company remembered readily the speech, and some passages from it were recited with the approbation and applause of all present. Johnson, meantime, was silent, and when the warmth of praise subsided, he coolly addressed the party, saying, "That speech I wrote in a garret in Exeter-street." * The company were of course thunderstruck, and stared at each other with utter amazement. And when Dr. Francis asked him how the speech could have been written by him, he explained the process as above quoted. Upon this "the company bestowed lavish encomiums on Johnson." One in particular praised his impartiality, observing that he dealt out reason and eloquence with an equal hand to both parties. "That is not quite

* When in our schoolboy days we were declaiming this speech, and, with all our sarcastic powers, were descanting upon "the atrocious crime of being a young man," who of us dreamed that we were repeating the words of Samuel Johnson instead of those of William Pitt!

true," said Johnson; "I saved appearances tolerably well, but I took care that the Whig dogs should not have the best of it."

In fact, it would appear that, in not a few instances, these parliamentary speeches were "manufactured out of whole cloth;" the writer knowing only the speaker, the question at issue, and the side of the question adopted.

It should be added here that this practice, while it brought to the Gentleman's Magazine a large increase of popularity and circulation, and to Johnson himself pecuniary recompense and general applause, yet "gratified him but little. On the contrary, he disapproved the deceit he was compelled to practice. His notions of morality were so strict that he would scarcely allow the violation of truth even in trivial instances." It is pleasant to add that he was not easy till he had disclosed the deception.

During the years 1742 and 1743 Johnson's pen was busy, and numerous productions were

the result. In 1744 he wrote the "Life of Richard Savage;" * "a man," writes Boswell, "of whom it is difficult to speak impartially, without wondering that he was for some time the intimate companion of Johnson; for his character was marked by profligacy, insolence, and ingratitude. Yet, as he undoubtedly had a warm and vigorous, though unregulated mind—had seen life in all its varieties—had been much in the company of the statesmen and wits of his time—he could communicate to Johnson an abundant supply of such materials as his philosophical curiosity most eagerly desired. And as Savage's misfortunes and misconduct had reduced him to the lowest state of wretchedness as a writer for bread, his

* Sir Joshua Reynolds, lighting upon this book, and ignorant of its authorship, "began to read it while he was standing with his arm leaning against a chimney-piece. It seized his attention so strongly that not being able to lay down the book till he had finished it, when he attempted to move he found his arm totally benumbed." Although eminent as a work of art, it was written with extraordinary dispatch. Said Johnson, "I wrote forty-eight of the printed octavo pages of the life of Savage at a sitting; but then I sat up all night."

visits to St. John's Gate naturally brought them together."

Thus these two men, so very diverse in character, yet sympathized in some points, as, for example, in using their pens for subsistence, and in their extreme poverty. For it would seem that, about this time, the pecuniary circumstances of Johnson were at their lowest point. "Indeed," remarks one writer, "his personal history is, about this period, a blank; hidden, it is to be feared, in the obscurity of indigence; and we cannot but think with a tender commiseration of the *distress* of such a man, rendered more poignant by being shared with a woman whom he so tenderly loved."

His appearance was frequently so shabby that he did not consider himself presentable in companies of friends to which he was now and then invited. "It is melancholy to reflect," says Boswell, "that Johnson and Savage were sometimes in such extreme indigence that they could not pay for a lodging; so that they have wan-

dered together, whole nights, in the streets. Yet in these almost incredible scenes of distress, we may suppose that Savage mentioned many of the anecdotes with which Johnson afterward enriched the lives of his unhappy companion, and those of other poets."

The reader will not fail to ask where amid all this destitution was Johnson's wife? There seems much uncertainty in respect to her situation during this dark period of her husband's affairs. Straitened circumstances may have induced her to leave London, for a time, and return to Lichfield; or there may have been some other arrangement. The record seems partially confused and silent.

Also, there is much silence touching Johnson himself during 1745 and 1746, the two years succeeding his publication of the Life of Savage. The emanations from his pen seem to have been few and slight, and, during these two years, it is indeed curious to remark that "his literary career appears to have been almost totally suspended." Yet it was the opinion of

Boswell that during this protracted interval he was making preparation for undertaking his great philological work, which was to occupy him so long, and waft him, in the sequel, to undying fame.

CHAPTER VI.

At thirty-eight years of age Johnson commenced his Dictionary of the English Language. The plan or prospectus of the work was published beforehand, and dedicated or addressed to Lord Chesterfield, who had expressed himself as warmly favorable to its success. A perusal of this plan clearly impresses us that Johnson was not unaware of the magnitude and difficulties of the work he was about to undertake. The following brief extract reveals to us a glimpse of some of those difficulties he apprehended, as well as affords a tolerably fair specimen of his general style of composition:

CHESTERFIELD.

"I cannot hope, in the warmest moments, to preserve so much caution through so long a work as not often to sink into negligence, or to obtain so much knowledge of all its parts as not frequently to fall by ignorance. I expect that sometimes the desire of accuracy will urge me to superfluities, and sometimes the fear of prolixity betray me to omissions; that in the extent of such variety I shall be often bewildered; and in the mazes of such intricacy be frequently entangled; that, in one part, refinement will be subtilized beyond exactness, and evidence dilated in another beyond perspicuity. Yet I do not despair of approbation from those who, knowing the uncertainty of conjecture, the scantiness of knowledge, the fallibility of memory, and the unsteadiness of attention, can compare the causes of error with the means of avoiding it, and the extent of art with the capacity of man."

Seven London publishers contracted with Johnson for the execution of this great work, and the stipulated price was $7,875.

For the mechanical part of the work six amanuenses were employed. He had an upper room fitted up like a counting-house, in which all his copyists were assembled, and where they executed their several tasks as they were assigned to them. The work proceeded nearly as follows:

1. The words of the new Dictionary were taken partly from other Dictionaries, and partly supplied by the author himself.

2. These words were written down in a column, with sufficient space left between them.

3. Then the etymology, definition, and various significations of each word were given in writing to the amanuenses to be copied in their places.

4. The authorities for the meaning of the words were copied from the books themselves, the passages to be copied being marked with a pencil.

Johnson "is now to be considered as tugging at his oar, as engaged in a steady, continued course of occupation, sufficient to employ all

his time for some years, and which was the best preventive of that constitutional melancholy which was ever lurking about him, ready to trouble his quiet."

To alleviate the drudgery of continuous labor such as detailed above, Johnson amused himself occasionally with literary exercises of an entirely different character. He also instituted a Club, comprising nine or ten persons of different professions. The purpose of this Club, or society, was literary discussions. "Thither he constantly resorted, and, with a disposition to please and be pleased, would pass those hours in a free and unrestrained interchange of sentiments, which otherwise had been spent at home in painful reflection." It may readily be supposed that in these meetings Johnson was the prominent character. Here he "talked his best," and disputed to his heart's content, and not unfrequently contended for victory as well as for truth. Hence he would not hesitate to express contrary opinions, at different times, on the same topic, and delighted to contradict

self-evident propositions. Sometimes the discussions would take the shape of mirthful conversation, in which Johnson, in his lucid and genial intervals, shone conspicuously. "He was a great contributor to the mirth of conversation by the many witty sayings he uttered, and the many excellent stories which his memory had treasured up, and which he would on occasion relate. . . . In the talent of *humor* there hardly ever was his equal. By this he was enabled to give to any relation that required it the graces and aids of expression, and to discriminate with the nicest exactness the characters of those whom it concerned." In fact, some of his friends, well qualified to judge, affirm that with all his great powers of mind, wit and humor were his most shining talents, and were at once rich and apparently inexhaustible.

Also, during the progress of his Dictionary, Johnson published "The Vanity of Human Wishes," being the "Tenth Satire of Juvenal Imitated."

This poem, however, seems to have been written in the year preceding the commencement of the Dictionary, and was produced with great rapidity. One day he is said to have composed seventy lines of it without touching pen to paper till all were finished. Indeed, this appears to have been his general habit of composing. "His defect of sight rendered writing and written corrections troublesome, and he, therefore, exercised his memory where others would have employed pen and paper."

In this book some of the more prominent disappointments of men are vividly pictured; and when Johnson was one day reading in the presence of a few friends his sketch of a scholar, with the various obstructions thrown in his way to fortune and to fame, he burst into a passion of tears. Doubtless he deeply knew whereof he was writing when he admonished the scholar that even amid the selectest advantages he should

> "Yet hope not life from grief or danger free,
> Nor think the doom of man reversed for thee:

Deign on the passing world to turn thine eyes,
And pause awhile from letters, to be wise;
There mark what ills the scholar's life assail,
Toil, envy, want, the patron and the jail.
See nations, slowly wise, and meanly just,
To buried merit raise the tardy bust.
If dreams yet flatter, once again attend,
Hear Lydiat's* life, and Galileo's† end."

It was about this time that his tragedy, "Irene," written, as we have seen, about a dozen years before, was brought upon the stage by his friend, David Garrick, the famous actor. Considered as a poem, this tragedy "is entitled to the praise of superior excellence. Analyzed into parts, it will furnish a rich store of noble sentiments, fine imagery, and beautiful language; but it is deficient in pathos, in that delicate power of touching the human feelings, which is the principal end of the drama."

It seems to have needed considerable revision and alteration to render it suitable for the stage. Johnson was greatly opposed to

* An unsuccessful writer and scholar of the 17th century.

† Galileo spent the last years of his life as a sort of prisoner under the ban of the Inquisition.

DAVID GARRICK.

this process with his tragedy, and so violent was the dispute between himself and Garrick touching this matter that the latter was obliged to apply for the interposition of a common friend. Johnson, at first very obstinate, yet submitted at length to the requisite changes.

It would seem that the success of this tragedy was only tolerable. It was much applauded the first night, and the zeal of Mr. Garrick

sustained it through nine nights, three of which were benefit nights for the author, and yielded him about $1,000, besides $500 which he received for the copyright.

Thus, notwithstanding the tragedy's indifferent success upon the stage, it proved, however, no mean venture for its author, and the amounts he received "were, at the time, large sums to Dr. Johnson."

CHAPTER VII.

In 1750, and while in the midst of his Dictionary labors, Johnson instituted a periodical paper which he entitled "The Rambler." In this paper "he came forth in the character for which he was eminently qualified—a majestic teacher of moral and religious wisdom." * The spirit with which he undertook this new enterprise may be seen in the following prayer which he composed and offered on the occasion:

"Almighty God, the giver of all good things, without whose help all labor is ineffectual, and without whose grace all wisdom is folly, grant, I beseech thee, that in this undertaking thy Holy Spirit may not be withheld from me, but that I may promote thy glory, and the salvation of myself and others. Grant this, O

* The sequel will show that this statement of Mr. Boswell is to be taken with some important exceptions.

Lord, for the sake of thy Son, Jesus Christ. Amen." *

This periodical commenced its existence in March, 1750,† and was issued semi-weekly,

* Is not this a worthy example, especially for a Christian author when entering upon a new literary enterprise? Do not all such need extra wisdom and skill? and who may guide them to great and distinguished success like "The Father of Lights?" "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God."

† It was near this time, and when Johnson was about forty years of age, that the following curious description of him came from the pen of Rev. Dr. Dodd, who was some years afterward convicted of forgery and executed:

"I spent yesterday afternoon with Johnson, the celebrated author of "The Rambler," who is, of all others, the oddest and most peculiar fellow I ever saw. He is six feet high, has a violent convulsion in his head, and his eyes are distorted. He speaks roughly and loud, listens to no man's opinions, thoroughly pertinacious of his own. Good sense flows from him in all he utters, and he seems possessed of a prodigious fund of knowledge, which he is not at all reserved in communicating; but in a manner so obstinate, ungenteel, and boorish as renders it disagreeable and unsatisfactory. In short, it is impossible for words to describe him. He seems often inattentive to what passes in company, and then looks like a person possessed by some superior spirit. I have been reflecting on him ever since I saw him. He is a man of most universal and surpassing genius, but, in himself, particular beyond expression."

Tuesday and Saturday, through exactly two years. Of these two hundred and eight essays, all but four, and a part of another, were written by Johnson himself; and it is testified that "many of these discourses, which we should suppose had been labored with all the slow attention of literary leisure, were written in haste as the moment pressed, without even being read over by him before they were

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

printed. The fine "Rambler" on Procrastination was hastily composed in Sir Joshua Reynold's parlor, while the boy waited to carry it to the

press ; and numberless are the instances of his writing under the immediate pressure of importunity or distress. . . . Sir Joshua Reynolds once asked him by what means he had attained his extraordinary accuracy and flow of language. He told him that he had early laid it down as a fixed rule to do his best on every occasion, and in every company ; to impart whatever he knew in the most forcible language he could put it in ; and that, by constant practice, and never suffering any careless expressions to escape him, or attempting to deliver his thoughts without arranging them in the clearest manner, it became habitual to him."

As "The Rambler" was the work of one man, there was, of course, much uniformity of style and thought—a circumstance that rendered it less popular than if it had been more distinguished by the charms of variety. Hence, it gained slowly upon the public at large. "I have never," he writes in the closing number, "been much a favorite of the public, nor can boast that, in the progress of my undertaking,

I have been animated by the rewards of the liberal, the caresses of the great, or the praises of the eminent."

Yet "The Rambler" was not without abundant testimonials of a highly favorable character, and from sources of the greatest respectability. "It increased in fame as in age. Soon after its first folio edition was concluded, it was published in six duodecimo volumes; and its author lived to see ten numerous editions of it in London, besides those of Ireland and Scotland."

The date of the last number of "The Rambler" was March 14, 1752.

Three days afterward Mrs. Johnson died, at the age of 63 years. Notwithstanding the great disparity in the ages of Johnson and his wife—she being his senior by twenty years—and although her personal attractions could never have been deemed otherwise than slender, yet she appears to have been loved by her husband with a deep and sincere affection, and in her death "he suffered a loss which there can be no doubt affected him with the deepest dis-

tress." "That his love for his wife was of the most ardent kind, and, during the long period of fifty years, was unimpaired by the lapse of time, is evident from various passages in the series of his 'Prayers and Meditations.'" He remained a widower till his death.

From the fruits of his various literary labors, Johnson seems to have now, at the age of forty-three, attained, for a time, to comfortable circumstances. Hence, he provided for himself a man-servant—a colored man, who had been brought up as a slave from Jamaica, and afterward emancipated. His name was Francis Barber; and he possessed fair intelligence for one of his class, and, with two brief intervals, remained with Johnson during the life of the latter. With improved circumstances, his circle of friends had, of course, enlarged, and, at this time, had become "extensive and various far beyond what has been generally imagined." "His acquaintance was now sought by persons of the first eminence in literature, and his house, in respect of the conversations there, became

an academy. Many persons were desirous of adding him to the number of their friends."

JOHNSON AND BARBER.

Amid all this increasing prosperity, Johnson seems not to have relaxed his literary diligence and pursuits. One year after "The Rambler" was concluded several gentlemen established a similar periodical, entitled "The Adventurer." Of the one hundred and thirty-eight numbers comprised in this work Johnson wrote about thirty; receiving two guineas each, which was probably the compensation awarded to the other

writers. Johnson's papers in "The Adventurer" are quite similar to those in "The Rambler."

Meanwhile he continued to prosecute vigorously his great work. "The conclusion, and also the perfection of his Dictionary, were objects from which his attention was not to be diverted. The avocations he gave way to were such only as, when complied with, served to invigorate his mind to the performance of his engagements to his employers and the public, and hasten the approach of the day that was to reward his labor with applause."

CHAPTER VIII.

JOHNSON'S HOMESTEAD.

It is pleasant to contemplate Johnson as a religious man, amid all his greatness in genius and literature. As he enters upon the year 1753 he records in his diary the following prayer:

"Almighty God, who hast continued my life to this day, grant that, by the assistance of thy Holy Spirit, I may improve the time which thou shalt grant me, to my eternal salvation. Make me to remember to thy glory, thy judgments, and thy mercies. Make me to consider the loss of my wife, whom thou hast taken from me, that it may dispose me, by thy grace, to lead the residue of my life in thy fear. Grant this, O Lord, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen."

In April of this year Johnson began the second volume of his Dictionary, "room being left," he says, "for preface, grammar, and history, none of them yet begun."

During this and the following year his attention was doubtless mainly given to the Dictionary, no publication of his being traceable in this interval, save his numbers of "The Adventurer," and "The Life of Edward Cave," published in the Gentleman's Magazine. As the Dictionary approached its completion, we notice the breach which occurred between Johnson and Lord Chesterfield. It has already been

observed that the "plan" of the Dictionary had been first prepared by Johnson and dedicated to Chesterfield, who had, in the outset, expressed great favor for the enterprise and confident hopes for its success. As, however, the great undertaking was commenced and prosecuted with patient labor for years, Lord Chesterfield, meanwhile, seems to have maintained entire silence in reference to it, and to have treated the enterprise and its author with sheer neglect. All this continued until the great work was near its completion, when Chesterfield, hoping and expecting, it is said, to be honored by the dedication of the Dictionary as well as the plan to himself, aroused from the neglect and indifference with which he had treated Johnson, and endeavored to conciliate him by the publication of two papers in recommendation of the forthcoming work, as well as highly complimentary to its author.*

* In one of these papers his Lordship writes, "It must be owned that our language is, at present, in a state of anarchy. . . . Good order and authority are now necessary. But where shall

But the courtly device failed to produce its effect. Johnson "despised the honeyed words." "Sir," said he to one of his friends, "after making great professions, he had, for many years, taken no notice of me; but when my Dictionary was coming out, he fell a scribbling in 'The World' about it. Upon which I wrote him a letter expressed in civil terms, but such as might show him that I did not mind what he said or wrote, and that I had done with him."

As this letter is brief and highly characteristic, we give it entire:

"To the Earl of Chesterfield:

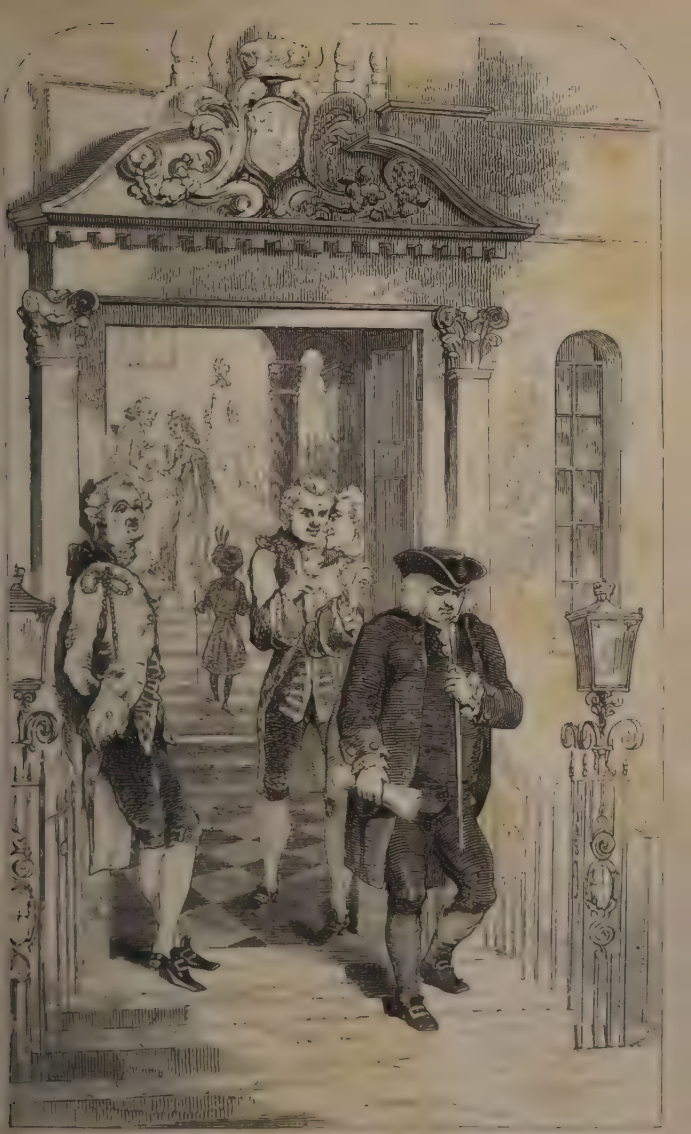
"My Lord: I have been lately informed by the proprietor of 'The World,' that two papers,

we find them, and, at the same time, the obedience due to them? We must have recourse to the old Roman expedient in times of confusion, and choose a dictator. Upon this principle I give my vote for Mr. Johnson to fill that great and arduous post; and I hereby declare that I make a total surrender of all my rights and privileges in the English language, as a free-born British subject, to the said Mr. Johnson during the term of his dictatorship."

in which my Dictionary is recommended to the public, were written by your lordship. To be so distinguished is an honor, which, being very little accustomed to favors from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

"When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your Lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address, and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *Le vainqueur du vainquer de la terre;* that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending; but I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your Lordship in public, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that I could; and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

"Seven years, my lord, have now past since I waited in your outward rooms, or was re-



Johnson Repulsed from Chesterfield's Door.

pulsed from your door; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it at last to the verge of publication without one act of assistance,* one word of encouragement, or one smile of favor. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a patron before.

. . . "Is not a patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and, when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labors had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary,† and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been

* But Dr. Johnson acknowledged that he did once receive from Lord Chesterfield the sum of $50. If so, though it were but a small amount, it should have prevented the assertion in the text.

† An allusion to the loss of his wife.

received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a patron which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

"Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favorer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less; for I have been long wakened from that dream of hope in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation.

"My Lord, your Lordship's most humble, most obedient servant, SAM. JOHNSON."

This breach between these two celebrities seems never to have been healed. Johnson had no opinion to conceal as it respects Lord Chesterfield. "This man," said he, "I thought had been a lord among wits, but I find he is only a wit among lords." And when his letters to his natural son were published, he observed that "they teach the morals of a prostitute and the manners of a dancing-master."

Before completing his Dictionary Johnson, wishing to consult the libraries there, visited Oxford in the summer of this year, (1754.) This visit occurred about twenty-three years after the close of his student-life at the University. During this interval he had suffered much through poverty, and had acquired fame in authorship, and was about to become illustrious by the completion of his great philological work.

He is, of course, much interested in this excursion. On his arrival he hastens to visit his old college. Great changes had occurred in so many years. The Master of his college was changed, and the present incumbent "knew not Joseph," and gave him but a chilling reception. "He waited on the Master, Dr. Radcliffe, who received him very coldly. Johnson at least expected that he would order a copy of his Dictionary, now near publication; but the Master did not choose to talk on the subject, never asked Johnson to dine, nor even to visit him while he stayed at Oxford."

Rev. Mr. Meeke, Fellow of Trinity, received Johnson very differently, and their mutual greetings were of the most cordial character. After taking leave of Meeke, he says to his companion, "I used to think Meeke had excellent parts when we were boys together at the college, but, alas,

'Lost in a convent's solitary gloom!'

I remember, at the classical lecture in the Hall, I could not bear Meeke's superiority, and I tried to sit as far from him as I could, that I might not hear him construe." He added: "About the same time of life Meeke was left behind at Oxford to feed on a Fellowship,* and I went to London to get my living. Now, sir, see the difference of our literary characters!" An editor subjoins the following judicious note: "Poverty was the stimulus which made Johnson exert a genius naturally, it may be supposed, more vigorous than Meeke's, and he

* A College Fellowship is one of the features of the English Universities, and consists of a Foundation for the maintenance, on certain conditions, of a resident scholar, called a *Fellow*.

was now beginning to enjoy the fame of which so many painful years of distress and penury had laid the foundation. Meeke had lived an easy life of decent competence, and, on the whole, perhaps as little envied Johnson as Johnson him. The goodness and justice of Providence equalize, to a degree not always visible at first sight, the happiness of mankind."

Johnson's first tutor was dead, which he greatly regretted, and related of him the following anecdote: "I once had been a whole morning sliding in Christ Church meadows, and missed his lecture in logic. After dinner he sent for me to his room. I expected a sharp rebuke for my idleness, and went with a beating heart. When we were seated he told me he had sent for me to drink a glass of wine with him, and to tell me he was *not* angry with me for missing his lecture. This was, in fact, a most severe reprimand. Some more of the boys were then sent for, and we spent a very pleasant afternoon."

All this, the wine excepted, is deeply interesting, and may furnish to teachers and masters a useful hint for their treatment of delinquent pupils. It seems useless to repeat that thousands of such have been won to duty by judicious kindness whom harshness and severity would have driven to desperation, and perhaps to ruin.

About this time, and soon after Johnson's return from Oxford to London, application was again made by some friends to secure for him the degree of Master of Arts. At this time this degree was esteemed an honor of considerable importance, and would "grace the title-page of his Dictionary; and his character in the literary world being by this time deservedly high, his friends thought that, if proper exertions were made, the University of Oxford would pay him the compliment."

As the result of this application, the Chancellor of Oxford recommended to the University, in the following graceful terms, the conferring of the Diploma:

"MR. VICE-CHANCELLOR AND GENTLEMEN: Mr. Samuel Johnson, who was formerly of Pembroke College, having very eminently distinguished himself by the publication of a series of essays, excellently calculated to form the manners of the people, and in which the cause of religion and morality is every-where maintained by the strongest powers of argument and language, and who shortly intends to publish a Dictionary of the English tongue, formed on a new plan, and executed with the greatest labor and judgment; I persuade myself that I shall act agreeable to the sentiments of the whole University, in desiring that it may be proposed in convocation to confer on him the degree of Master of Arts by diploma, to which I readily give my consent; and am, Mr. Vice-Chancellor and gentlemen, your affectionate friend and servant."

The degree was, of course, conferred, for which Johnson returned, in Latin, his grateful acknowledgments.

CHAPTER IX.

THE great Dictionary is at last completed. The publishers and proprietors were much vexed with the long delay, and their patience was well-nigh exhausted. The work had occupied seven years, although its author had given them reason to expect its completion in less than half that time; and he had, long before reaching the end of his labor, received all the stipulated compensation. Mr. Miller was the publisher on whom devolved the principal charge of bringing out the Dictionary, and "when the messenger who carried the last sheet to Miller returned, Johnson asked him, 'Well, what did he say?' 'Sir,' answered the messenger, 'he said, Thank God, I have done with him.' 'I am glad,' replied Johnson with a smile, 'that he thanks God for any thing.'"

A brief contemporary notice or two of this Dictionary may not be out of place.

"The Dictionary, with a Grammar and History of the English Language, being now at length published in two volumes folio, the world contemplated with wonder so stupenduous a work achieved by one man, while other countries had thought such undertakings fit only for whole academies. . . . The definitions have always appeared to me such astonishing proofs of acuteness of intellect and precision of language as indicate a genius of the highest rank. This it is which marks the superior excellence of Johnson's Dictionary over others equally or even more voluminous."

"The Dictionary is arrived. The preface is noble. There is a grammar prefixed, and the history of the language is pretty full; but you may plainly perceive strokes of laxity and indolence. They are two most unwieldy volumes. I have written him an invitation. I fear his preface will disgust by the expression of his consciousness of superiority, and of his contempt of patronage."

"I most sincerely congratulate the public

upon the acquisition of a work long wanted, and now executed with an industry, accuracy, and judgment equal to the importance of the subject." *

The somber language of Johnson, as he dismisses his great work to the world, seems to speak little for the happiness accompanying literary eminence and fame:

"I may surely be contented without the praise of perfection, which if I could obtain in this gloom of solitude, what would it avail me? I have protracted my work till most of those whom I wished to please have sunk into the grave, and success and miscarriage are empty sounds. I therefore dismiss it with frigid tranquillity, having little to fear or hope from censure or from praise."

* "Johnson's Dictionary first brought order out of the chaos of the language; and though it has been generally superseded by later compilations, yet the fundamental excellences of all modern dictionaries of the English language have their elements in that work, and its author must always stand the confessed founder of English lexicography."—*American Encyclopedia.*

The Dictionary brought to its author great fame and but slight wealth. "He had spent, during the progress of the work, the money for which he had contracted to write his Dictionary. We have seen that the reward of his labor was only fifteen hundred and seventy-five pounds, ($7,875;) and when the expense of amanuenses, paper, and other articles are deducted, his clear profit was very inconsiderable."

Hence he was not placed above the necessity of "making provision for the day that was passing over him." No royal or noble patron extended a munificent hand to give independence to the man who had conferred stability on the language of his country. We may feel indignant that there should have been such unworthy neglect; but we must, at the same time, congratulate ourselves when we consider, that to this very neglect, operating to rouse the natural indolence of his constitution, we owe many valuable productions which otherwise, perhaps, might never have appeared. The following note to one of his friends presents a

painful hint of the condition of his exchequer at this period:

"GOUGH SQUARE, *March* 16, 1756.

"SIR: I am obliged to entreat your assistance; I am now under an arrest for five pounds eighteen shillings. Mr. Strahan, from whom I should have received the necessary help in this case is not at home, and I am afraid of not finding Mr. Miller. If you will be so good as to send me this sum I will very gratefully repay you, and add to it all former obligations.

"I am, sir, your most obedient and most humble servant, SAM. JOHNSON."

The writings of Johnson in the course of this year (1756) were numerous, and were in the shape of essays, reviews, introductions, etc., and some of them anonymous. He also indulged in another species of composition, as the following curious extract will show:

"About this time, as it is supposed, he composed pulpit discourses for sundry clergymen, and for these he made no scruple of confessing

Johnson's House in Gough Square.

he was paid. His price, I am informed, was a moderate one, a guinea; and such was his notion of justice that, having been paid, he considered them so absolutely the property of the purchaser as to renounce all claim to them. He reckoned that he had written about forty sermons; but, except as to some, knew not in what hands they were. I have, said he, been paid for them, and have no right to inquire about them." *

There were those, however, among Johnson's friends who considered many of these miscellaneous writings a misapplication of his talents. They deemed that it was beneath him who had attained such eminence as a writer, that he

* Did not Johnson know the use to be made of these sermons? Was it any more criminal to compose "Parliamentary Debates," and palm them off upon the public as the speeches of others, than to write sermons with the same view? And if the writer contributed to deception in the one case, did he not do the same thing in the other? And if so, was not the one transaction as much a matter for repentance as the other? So much for the *author* of the sermons. As for the *preachers* of these same sermons—preaching them as their own—there can be but one judgment, that of unqualified condemnation.

should waste his energies in aiding magazines, reviews, and even newspapers, and in prefaces and dedications for books, whose authors could not write them for themselves. Hence certain publishers proposed to him a literary undertaking of more character and dignity, and such as seemed to afford a prospect both of amusement and profit. "This was an edition of Shakspeare's dramatic works, which, by a concurrence of circumstances, was now becoming necessary to answer the increasing demand of the public for the writings of that author."

The following personal notices of Johnson at this period of his life (age forty-seven) will not be without interest:

"Though his time seemed to be bespoke, and quite engrossed, his house was always open to all his acquaintance, new and old. His amanuensis has given up his pen, the printer's devil has waited on the stairs for a proof-sheet, and the press has often stood still, while his visitors were delighted and instructed. No subject ever came amiss to him. He could trans-

fer his thoughts from one thing to another with the most accommodating facility. He had the art, for which Locke was famous, of leading people to talk on their favorite subjects, and on what they knew best. By this he acquired a great deal of information. What he once heard he rarely forgot. They gave him their best conversation, and he generally made them pleased with themselves for endeavoring to please him. Poet Smart used to relate that his first conversation with Johnson was of such variety and length that it began with poetry and ended at fluxions. He always talked as if he was talking upon oath. He was the wisest person, and had the most knowledge in ready cash, that Tyers ever knew. Johnson's advice was consulted on all occasions. He was known to be a good casuist, and, therefore, had many cases submitted for his judgment. His conversation, in the judgment of others, was thought to be equal to his correct writings. Perhaps the tongue will throw out more animated expressions than the pen. He said the most

common things in the newest manner. He always commanded attention and regard. His person, though unadorned with dress, and even deformed by neglect, made you expect something, and you was hardly ever disappointed. His manner was interesting; the tone of his voice and the sincerity of his expressions, even when they did not captivate your affections or carry conviction, prevented contempt." . . .

"No man dared to take liberties with him, nor flatly contradict him, for he could repel any attack, having always about him the weapons of ridicule, of wit, and of argument. It must be owned that some who had the desire to be admitted to him thought him too dogmatical, and as exacting too much homage to his opinions, and came no more." "His hand and his heart were always open to charity. The objects under his own roof were only a few of the subjects for relief. He was ever at the head of subscription in cases of distress. His guinea, as he said of another man of bountiful disposition, was always ready. He wrote an exhorta-

tion to public bounty. He drew up a paper to recommend the French prisoners, in the last war but one, to the English benevolence, which was of service. He implored the hand of benevolence for others, even when he almost seemed a proper object of relief himself."

CHAPTER X.

JOHNSON now issued proposals for a new edition of Shakspeare with notes. In this prospectus he evinced his perfect knowledge of what an extent and variety of research such an undertaking required. "But his indolence prevented him from pursuing it with that diligence which alone can collect those scattered facts that genius, however acute, penetrating, and luminous, cannot discover by its own force. It is remarkable that this time his fancied activity was for the moment so vigorous that he promised his work should be published before Christmas, 1757. Yet nine years elapsed before it ever saw the light."

This outrageous delay brought on him the satirical squib from Churchill:

> "He for subscribers baits his hook,
> And takes your cash; but where's the book?

No matter where; wise fear, you know,
Forbids the robbing of a foe;
But what, to serve our private ends,
Forbids the cheating of our friends?"

One would have supposed that a work like the one he had now undertaken, and which seemed so well adapted to his genius, would have been prosecuted with delight as well as dispatch. But it was quite otherwise. "I look upon this as I did upon the Dictionary; it is all *work;* and my inducement to it is not love or desire of fame, but the want of money, which is the only motive to writing that I know of." *

The result was correspondent; for one of his friends writes that "neither did he set himself to collect early editions of his author, old plays, translations of histories; and of the classics, and other materials necessary for his purpose,

* Happily, a thousand others have known of motives to writing infinitely superior. There is such a thing as writing *con amore;* and such a thing as writing from a sense of duty; and also such a thing as writing from the principle of simple benevolence. Better had it been for Johnson, and even for his literary fame, had such motives more fully inspired his mighty pen.

nor could he be prevailed on to enter into that course of reading without which it seemed impossible to come at the sense of his author. It was provoking to all his friends to see him waste his days, his weeks, and his months so long, that they feared a mental lethargy had seized him, out of which he would never recover."

After two years, however, from the time he commenced his Shakspeare he aroused to activity. But it was not for the work which he had pledged to the public, but for furnishing a new series of periodical essays under the title of "The Idler," as expressive of his aversion to the labor requisite to his principal work.*

* And it was this aversion "that not only so long delayed his Shakspeare, but rendered its value so moderate when it did, at last, make its appearance. It is as true in composition as in any other labor, that where one attempts a work to which he is averse, such a work will very likely prove a failure. Our own Irving practiced a sounder philosophy, in seizing for his work of composition his more brilliant hours, and when he was "in the spirit" of writing. We do not urge or advise that these moments of inspiration should be waited for by the writer; but they should be seized and improved with the utmost eagerness whenever they come to him.

He commenced these essays April 15, 1758; and they were published every Saturday in a weekly newspaper, and were continued, like "The Rambler," through two years. Of the two hundred and three numbers, all but twelve were written by Johnson himself.

"The Idler" is evidently the work of the same mind which produced "The Rambler," but has less body and more spirit. It has more variety of real life, and greater facility of language. He describes the miseries of idleness with the lively sensations of one who has felt them; and in his private memorandums while engaged in it we find, "This year I hope to learn diligence." Many of these excellent essays were written as hastily as an ordinary letter. . . . Yet there are in "The Idler" several papers which show as much profundity of thought, and labor of language, as any of this great man's writings."

About the time of commencing "The Idler" Johnson was offered the gift of a rectory, with a valuable living, if he were inclined to enter into

holy orders. He declined the offer, "partly from a conscientious motive, being persuaded that his temper and his habits rendered him unfit for that assiduous and familiar instruction of the vulgar and ignorant which he held to be an essential duty in a clergyman, and partly because his love of a London life was so strong that he would have thought himself an exile in any other place, particularly if residing in the country."

And so Johnson remains poor. In fact, during this year, 1758, his finances seem as low as ever, and he finds it necessary to retrench his expenses. He gave up his house and removed to chambers, where he lived "in poverty, total idleness, and the pride of literature." A friend pays him a morning visit intending to write a letter there, but, "to his great surprise, finds an author by profession without pen, ink, or paper."

Added to the sorrows of poverty, he is doomed again to the pains of bereavement. Early in 1759 his widowed mother de-

parted this life, at the great age of ninety years.

Aware of her low condition, he addresses her the following note, which seems to have been written at London on the very day of her death at Lichfield:

"*January* 20, 1759.

"DEAR HONORED MOTHER: Neither your condition nor your character make it fit for me to say much. You have been the best mother, and, I believe, the best woman, in the world. I thank you for your indulgence to me, and beg forgiveness of all that I have omitted to do well. God grant you his Holy Spirit, and receive you to everlasting happiness, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen! Lord Jesus, receive your spirit! Amen! I am, dear, dear mother, your dutiful son,

"SAM. JOHNSON."*

*Johnson here addresses his dying mother as "dear" and "honored;" but, we must think, with little reason. How dear and honored could she have been when, at a distance of only one hundred and sixteen miles, he had allowed a score of years to pass without visiting or seeing her; when, after all

Thus Johnson was not present at the death or funeral of his mother; but to his step-daughter at Lichfield, who had long resided with his mother, he expressed himself as being "now very desolate."

To defray, as he said, the expenses of his mother's funeral, and to cancel some small debts of her's, he soon after her death wrote his "Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia." He told a friend that he composed this book in the evenings of a single week, sent it to press in portions as it was written, and had never afterward read it over. The publisher gave him $500 for the manuscript, and gave $125 more when it came to a second edition.

Boswell speaks of this admirable work as one

those years of absence, on hearing of her dying sickness, he neglected to hasten to her; and when this very letter, in which he addresses her as "dear and honored," was written as a sort of postscript to a letter which he had addressed to his step-daughter! Children, whether older or younger, cannot be too well assured that such is no true way of honoring their parents. Well might he write to his step-daughter, after his mother's death, "If she were to live again I should behave better to her."

which, though its author "had written nothing else, would have rendered his name immortal in the world of literature. None of his writings has been so extensively diffused over Europe, for it has been translated into most, if not all, the modern languages. This tale, with all the charms of oriental imagery, and all the force and beauty of which the English language is capable, leads us through the most important scenes of human life, and shows us that this stage of our being is full of vanity and vexation of spirit." And it was a criticism of a very accomplished lady, that Rasselas "may be considered as a more enlarged and more deeply philosophical discourse in prose upon the interesting truth which, in his 'Vanity of Human Wishes,' he had so successfully enforced in verse."

CHAPTER XI.

JOHNSON has now gone by his fiftieth year. He is still writing, and various miscellaneous pieces drop from his pen, while yet there seems but little progress, and not much is accomplished that is worthy of note. He is probably proceeding with his edition of Shakspeare; but how zealously or how languidly no one now knows. Amid this year of 1761 he speaks of his life as "dissipated and useless," and he is still straitened and poor.

But a brighter day is about to dawn upon Johnson. The old king is dead, during whose reign no mark of royal favor had honored literary attainments and eminence. But George III. has ascended the throne of England, and the whole land rejoices. He was educated in his own country, and his education, "as well as his taste, prompted him to be the patron of science and the arts."

GEORGE III.

Johnson is early named to the king by several friends as a suitable candidate for a pension, and it was shortly announced to him that the application would be successful. He is said to have replied, "The English language does not afford me terms adequate to my feelings on this occasion. I must have recourse to the French, I am *penetré* * with his majesty's goodness."

The pension was granted—$1,500 a year—and the great author and sage was at once elevated to comfortable circumstances.

Every way honorable was this mark of royal favor. The young king had no interested motive in conferring it. Then the pen of

* Ay; but would not our word *penetrated* have answered as well?

Johnson was an instrument of great power, and could accomplish much for the welfare or danger of the new reign; but all this had nothing to do with the noble gift. It was emphatically a "reward of merit," and it was alike honorable to the king and to the subject, when Lord Bute announced to the latter, "It (the pension) is not given you for any thing you are to do, but for what you have done." These grand words were repeated twice to Johnson to make sure that he heard and comprehended them well.

Johnson on the reception of this gift, so great and important to him, thus addressed Lord Bute:

"Bounty always receives part of its value from the manner in which it is bestowed. Your lordship's kindness includes every circumstance that can gratify delicacy, or enforce obligation. You have conferred your favors on a man who has neither alliance nor interest, who has not merited them by services, nor courted them by officiousness; you have spared

him the shame of solicitation, and the anxiety of suspense.

"What has been thus elegantly given will, I hope, not be reproachfully enjoyed. I shall endeavor to give your lordship the only recompense which generosity desires—the gratification of finding that your benefits are not improperly bestowed. I am, my Lord, your lordship's most obedient and most humble servant."

"The addition of three hundred pounds a year to what Johnson was able to earn by the ordinary exercise of his talents raised him to a state of comparative affluence, and afforded him the means of assisting many whose real or pretended wants had formerly excited his compassion. He now practiced a rule which he often recommended to his friends, always to carry some loose money to give to beggars."

Another writes: "He loved the poor as I never yet saw any one else do, with an earnest desire to make them happy. . . . He nursed whole nests of people in his house, where the lame, the blind, the sick, and the sorrowful

found a sure retreat from all the evils whence his little income could secure them."

Johnson's more familiar life at this time is thus depicted by one who enjoyed his friendship:

"His general mode of life during my acquaintance seemed to be pretty uniform. About twelve o'clock I commonly visited him, and frequently found him in bed or declaiming over his tea, which he drank very plentifully. He generally had a levee of morning visitors, chiefly men of letters: Hawkesworth, Goldsmith, Murphy, Langton, Steevens, Beauclerk, etc., etc., and sometimes learned ladies; particularly I remember a French lady of wit and fashion doing him the honor of a visit. He seemed to me to be considered as a kind of public oracle, whom every body thought they had a right to visit and consult; and doubtless they were well rewarded. I never could discover how he found time for his compositions. He declaimed all the morning, then went to dinner at a tavern, where he commonly stayed

late, and then drank his tea at some friend's house, over which he loitered a great while, but seldom took supper. I fancy he must have read and wrote chiefly in the night. . . . He frequently gave all the silver in his pocket to the poor, who watched him between his house and the tavern where he dined. He walked the streets at all hours, and said he was never robbed, for the rogues knew he had little money, nor had the appearance of having much.

"Though the most accessible and communicative man alive, yet when he suspected he was invited to be exhibited he constantly spurned the invitation.

"Johnson was much attached to London. He observed that a man stored his mind better there than anywhere else; and that in remote situations a man's body might be feasted, but his mind was starved, and his faculties apt to degenerate from want of exercise and competition. No place, (he said,) cured a man's vanity or arrogance so well as London; for as no man was either great or good *per se*, but

as compared with others not so good or great, he was sure to find in the great metropolis many his equals, and some his superiors. He observed that a man in London was in less danger of falling in love indiscreetly there than anywhere else; for there the difficulty of deciding between the conflicting pretensions of a vast variety of objects kept him safe. He told me that he had frequently been offered country preferment if he would consent to take orders; but he could not leave the improved society of the capital, or consent to exchange the exhilarating joys and splendid decorations of public life for the obscurity, insipidity, and uniformity of remote situations." *

The following remarks expressive of Johnson's bearing toward Ireland have a present interest, and will meet the warm approval of multitudes:

"He had great compassion for the miseries and distresses of the Irish nation, particularly the Papists; and severely reprobated the bar-

* Rev. Dr. Maxwell.

barous, debilitating policy of the British government, which, he said, was the most detestable mode of persecution. To a gentleman who hinted that such policy might be necessary to support the authority of the English government, he replied by saying, 'Let the authority of the English government perish, rather than be maintained by iniquity. Better would it be to restrain the turbulence of the natives by the authority of the sword, and to make them amenable to law and justice by an effectual and vigorous police, than to grind them to powder by all manner of disabilities and incapacities. Better,' said he, 'to hang or drown people at once, than by an unrelenting persecution to beggar and starve them.'"

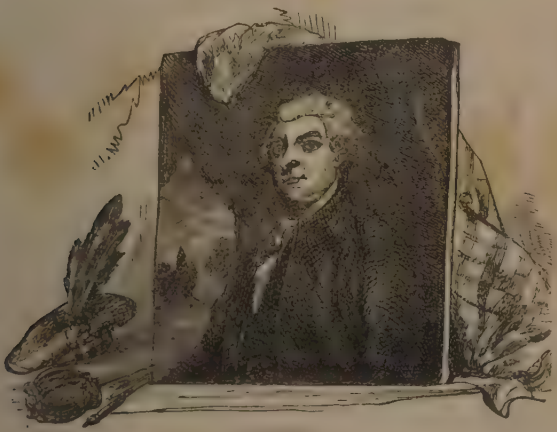
Equal candor and good sense are manifested in the following testimony touching Methodism and its great founder. "He observed that the established clergy in general did not preach plain enough, and that the polished periods and glittering sentences flew over the heads of the common people without any impression upon

their hearts. Something might be necessary, he observed, to excite the affections of the common people, who were sunk in languor and lethargy, and, therefore, he supposed that the new concomitants of Methodism might probably produce so desirable an effect. The mind, like the body, he observed, delighted in change and novelty, and, even in religion itself, courted new appearances and modifications. Whatever might be thought of some Methodist teachers, he said he could scarcely doubt the sincerity of that man * who traveled nine hundred miles in a month, and preached twelves times a week; for no adequate reward, merely temporal, could be given for such indefatigable labor."

* Wesley.

CHAPTER XII.

It was about this time (1763) that Johnson and his famous biographer, James Boswell, first met.



BOSWELL.

Boswell was a Scotchman, son of a Scotch judge, and was about twenty-two years of age at his first interview with Johnson. He had been educated at Edinburgh and Glasgow, and

early manifested an ambition for intimacy with distinguished men, a fondness for English society, and a predilection for authorship. He was a man of marked faults, being characterized by an inordinate egotism and vanity, habits of self-indulgence, mean tastes, and obsequiousness to great men. Subsequently to his first acquaintance with Johnson he traveled over Europe, and had numerous love adventures with ladies of almost every civilized nation; and, in 1769, married his cousin, Miss Montgomery.*

* The following picture of Boswell, from the masterly pencil of Macaulay—though overdrawn, as we must think—is yet too good to be omitted here:

"Many of the greatest men that ever lived have written biography; Boswell was one of the smallest men that ever lived, and he has beaten them all. He was, if we are to give any credit to his own account, or to the united testimony of all who knew him, a man of the meanest and feeblest intellect. Johnson described him as a fellow who had missed his only chance of immortality by not having been alive when the Dunciad was written. Beauclerk used his name as a proverbial expression for a bore. He was the laughing-stock of the whole of that brilliant society which has owed to him the greater part of its fame. He was always laying himself at the feet of some eminent man, and begging to be spit upon and trampled upon . . . Servile and impertinent, shallow and pedantic, a bigot

Long before he had seen Johnson he had heard of him, and read his writings "with delight and instruction, and had the highest reverence for their author, which had grown up, in his fancy, into a kind of mysterious veneration."

Strange as it may have been, Johnson seems to have fancied this young man in spite of his foibles; although it must be admitted, with all deference to Macaulay, that, whatever may have been Boswell's faults and weaknesses, he was a man of no ordinary abilities; for no man without superior abilities could ever have produced "the most entertaining biography ever written, and such as to render its subject better known to us than any other human being who has been more than eighty years in his grave."

Thus, at twenty-two years of age, Boswell, on a visit to London, had the address to be

and a sot, bloated with family pride, and eternally blustering about the dignity of a born gentleman, yet stooping to be a tale-bearer, an evesdropper, a common butt in the taverns of London."

introduced to Johnson, and always, afterward, sought his society as one of his superior privileges and pleasures.

Of 1763, Boswell writes: "This is to me a memorable year, for in it I had the happiness to obtain the acquaintance of that extraordinary man whose memoirs I am now writing; an acquaintance which I shall ever esteem as one of the most fortunate circumstances in my life."

Boswell was honored with his first introduction to Johnson at the house of a Mr. Davis. Johnson entered during tea, and Boswell, as he was presented, was much agitated.

At this first introduction Johnson descants upon "Kames' Elements of Criticism," calling it a pretty essay, though much of it chimerical. He speaks of Wilkes, who had attacked public measures and the royal family, as an abusive scoundrel who should be well ducked. He spoke somewhat disparagingly of Sheridan, Derrick, and others, and seems to have treated his new acquaintance somewhat gruffly at first,

Boswell's Introduction to Johnson.

but more civilly toward the close of the interview. Thus Boswell expresses himself as highly pleased with "the extraordinary vigor of his conversation," and regrets that he was obliged to leave to fulfill another engagement. He was satisfied that, "though there was a roughness in his manner, there was no ill-nature in his disposition."

About a week afterward Boswell sought a second interview, and called on Johnson at his own lodgings. "He received me," says Boswell, "very courteously; but it must be confessed that his apartment, and furniture, and morning dress were sufficiently uncouth. His brown suit of clothes looked very rusty; he had on a little old shriveled, unpowdered wig, which was too small for his head; his shirt, neck, and knees of his breeches were loose, his black worsted stockings ill-drawn up, and he had a pair of unbuckled shoes by way of slippers. But all these slovenly particularities were forgotten the moment that he began to talk."

In the course of the conversation Johnson speaks of a crazy acquaintance of his whom he commiserates. "I did not think he ought to be shut up. His infirmities were not noxious to society. He insisted on people praying with him; and I'd as lief pray with Kit Smart as with any one else. Another charge was that he did not love clean linen; and I have no passion for it."

Mr. Boswell exhibits promptly his characteristic flippancy, for when, at this interview, Johnson told him that he generally went abroad at four in the afternoon, and seldom came home till two in the morning, "I took the liberty," says Boswell, "to ask if he did not think it wrong to live thus, and not to make more use of his great talents. He owned it was a bad habit."

"Give me your hand; I have taken a liking to you." Such were the words of Johnson to Boswell at their next interview but one. A curious friendship! A singular affiliation of two individuals in many respects so diverse.

A youth of twenty-two allied to a sage of fifty-four. A young man talented, in some sense, it is true, but flippant, bold, pushing, conceited, yet admitted to close fellowship with one great above most, and whose fame was established and his name illustrious. A magnificent luminary had attracted a sparkling satellite from afar, that ceased not to circle around its central orb to the hour of its setting and disappearance forever.

They are, as observed, enjoying another interview, and it is at the Mitre, one of the London taverns. The young man, Boswell, is greatly elated, and a feeling of sublimity is stealing over him. "The orthodox, high-church sound of the Mitre, the figure and manners of the celebrated Samuel Johnson, the extraordinary power and precision of his conversation, and the pride arising from finding myself admitted as his companion, produced a variety of sensations, and a pleasing elevation of mind beyond what I had ever before experienced."

Johnson talks his best, as usual.

"Colley Cibber, sir, was by no means a blockhead."

"Sir, I do not think Gray a first-rate poet. He has not a bold imagination, nor much command of words. . . . His Elegy in a Churchyard has a happy selection of images, but I don't like what are called his great things."

He declares off from bigotry, and astonishes Boswell with his catholic spirit. "For my part, sir, I think all Christians, whether Papists or Protestants, agree in the essential articles, and that their differences are trivial, and rather political than religious." *

In this interview they talk also of ghosts, or, rather, of belief in them; wherein Johnson evinces equal candor as on the theme of Christian charity. Foote and Goldsmith are partially canvassed, the latter of whom, says Johnson,

* A catholic spirit is beautiful; but, doubtless, by "Protestants," here, Johnson means the Church of England only; as his charity, when afterward in Scotland, seemed not to be sufficiently extensive to allow him to listen to a Presbyterian sermon, or enter a Presbyterian church; and what, in his eye, were the Puritans but "dogs."

"is one of the first men we now have as an author, and he is a very worthy man too."

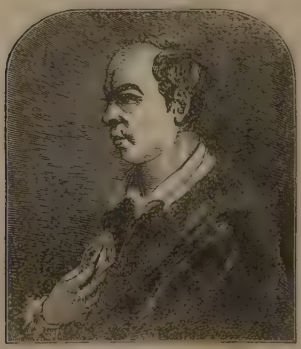
Then they converse of Boswell's contemplated travels. "Your going abroad, sir, and breaking off idle habits, may be of great importance to you. I would go where there are courts and learned men. There is a great deal of Spain that has not been perambulated. I would have you go thither. A man of inferior talents to yours may furnish us with useful observations upon that country."

The interview closes thus: "It is very good in you," says Boswell, "to allow me to be with you thus. Had it been foretold to me, some years ago, that I should pass an evening with the author of "The Rambler," how should I have exulted." "Sir," replies Johnson, "I am glad we have met; I hope we shall pass many evenings, and mornings too, together."

And so they parted at two in the morning, after having finished a couple of bottles of Port. A bad accompaniment. Let scholars, young and old, beware.

CHAPTER XIII.

As the celebrated Oliver Goldsmith figures somewhat prominently in the story of Johnson a brief personal notice of him will be in place.



OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

He was a native of Ireland, and contemporary with Burke at Trinity College, Dublin. He seems not to have excelled in college, studied medicine at Edinburgh, made the tour of Europe, and early became a reviewer and newspaper writer. He had an extraordinary faculty of displaying to advantage whatever he knew, and is said to have "touched nothing which he did not adorn." His person was short, countenance coarse and vulgar, and general

deportment awkward. He was shallow in conversation, had some wit but "no humor, and never told a story but he spoiled it." In a word, this man possessed noble qualities, and such as were of the opposite character. He was both eminent and mean; while Walpole, who admired his writings, called him "an insipid idiot;" and Garrick describes him as

> "For shortness called Noll,
> Who wrote like an angel and talked like poor Poll."

Goldsmith became one of Johnson's admirers, earnestly cultivated his acquaintance, and was much benefited by the contemplation of such a model. Nor was Johnson backward in his appreciation of Goldsmith; and, among his earliest recorded sayings of him, he asserts, "Dr. Goldsmith is one of the first men we now have as an author, and he is a very worthy man too. He has been loose in his principles, but he is coming right."

Goldsmith seems to have now cultivated much intimacy with Johnson, and was recognized as one of the brightest ornaments of the

Johnsonian society. The following anecdote of these two men may be recited as characteristic of both of them, and the incident occurred just at this point of our story:

"I received one morning," says Johnson, "a message from poor Goldsmith that he was in great distress; and as it was not in his power to come to me, begging that I would come to him as soon as possible. I sent him a guinea, and promised to come to him directly. I accordingly went as soon as I was dressed, and found that his landlady had arrested him for his rent, at which he was in a violent passion. I perceived that he had already changed my guinea, and had got a bottle of Madeira and a glass before him. I put the cork into the bottle, desired he would be calm, and began to talk to him of the means by which he might be extricated. He then told me that he had a novel ready for the press, which he produced to me. I looked into it, and saw its merit, told the landlady I should soon return, and having gone to the bookseller, sold it for sixty

Goldsmith under Arrest.

pounds. I brought Goldsmith the money and he discharged his rent, not without rating his landlady in a high tone for having used him so ill."

We here insert some more of Johnson's characteristic criticisms upon men and things.

Of Churchill and his poetry he says: "Sir, I called the fellow a blockhead at first, and I will call him a blockhead still. . . . He is a tree that cannot produce good fruit, he only bears crabs. But, sir, a tree that produces a great many crabs is better than a tree which produces only a few."

Speaking of the eminent writers in Queen Anne's reign: "I think," said he, "Dr. Arbuthnot the first among them. He was the most universal genius, being an excellent physician, a man of deep learning, and a man of much humor. Mr. Addison was, to be sure, a great man. His learning was not profound; but his morality, his humor, and his elegance of writing set him very high."

Mr. Ogilvie had observed to Johnson that

Scotland had a good many noble wild prospects. Johnson replied, "I believe, sir, you have a great many. Norway, too, has wild prospects, and Lapland is remarkable for prodigious noble wild prospects. But, sir, let me tell you the noblest prospect which a Scotchman ever sees is the high road that leads him to England."

A similar reply was given to a lady who was telling him of the sublime prospects up the St. Lawrence. "Come, madam, confess that nothing ever equaled your pleasure in seeing that sight reversed, and finding yourself looking at the happy prospect *down* the St. Lawrence."

He detested Brighthelmstone Downs "because," said he, "it is a country so truly desolate that if one had a mind to hang one's self for desperation at being obliged to live there, it would be difficult to find a tree on which to fasten the rope."

"Idleness is a disease which must be combated; but I would not advise a rigid adherence to a particular plan of study. I myself have

never persisted in any plan for two days together. A man ought to read just as inclination leads him, for what he reads as a task will do him little good. A young man should read five hours in a day, and so may acquire a great deal of knowledge."

Speaking of the qualifications of an historian, he observed that "great abilities are not requisite, for in historical composition all the greatest powers of the human mind are quiescent. He has facts ready to his hand, so there is no exercise of invention. Imagination is not required in any high degree; only about as much as is used in the lower kinds of poetry. Some penetration, accuracy, and coloring will fit a man for the task if he can give the application which is necessary."

Johnson seems to have had but a slight taste for landscape prospects, rural scenery, etc., and advised Boswell, as he was about to travel, "to go a hundred miles to speak with one wise man rather than five miles to see one fair town; and "he accordingly advised me," says

he, "to be as much as I could with the professors in the universities, and with the clergy; for from their conversation I might expect the best accounts of every thing in whatever country I should be, with the additional advantage of keeping my learning alive."

An impudent fellow from Scotland affected to be a savage, and to rail at all established systems. "There is nothing surprising in this, sir. He wants to make himself conspicuous. He would tumble in a hogsty as long as you looked at him and called to him to come out. But let him alone, never mind him, and he'll soon give it over."

This same person insisted that there was no distinction between virtue and vice. "Why, sir," says Johnson, "if the fellow does not think as he speaks he is lying; and I see not what honor he can propose to himself for having the character of a liar. But if he does really think that there is no distinction between virtue and vice, why, sir, when he leaves our houses, let us count our spoons."

Criticising the style of Hume, Johnson observes, "Why, sir, his style is not English; the structure of his sentences is French. Now the French structure and the English structure may, in the nature of things, be equally good. But if you allow that the English language is established, he is wrong. My name might originally have been Nicholson, as well as Johnson; but were you to call me Nicholson now, you would call me very absurdly."

He further says of Hume that he and other skeptical innovators are vain men, and will gratify themselves at any expense. Truth will not afford sufficient food to their vanity, so they have betaken themselves to error. Truth, sir, is a cow which will yield such people no more milk, and so they are gone to milk the bull. If I could have allowed myself to gratify my vanity at the expense of truth, what fame might I have acquired? Every thing which Hume has advanced against Christianity had passed through my mind long before he wrote. Always remember this, that after a system is well set-

tled upon positive evidence, a few partial objections ought not to shake it. The human mind is so limited that it cannot take in all the parts of a subject, so that there may be objections raised against any thing. There are objections against a *plenum*, and objections against a *vacuum;* yet one of them must certainly be true."

Remarking upon Hume's argument against the belief of miracles, he presents us the following clear and judicious statement:

"Why, sir, the great difficulty of proving miracles should make us very cautious in believing them. But let us consider; although God has made nature to operate by certain fixed laws, yet it is not unreasonable to think that he may suspend those laws in order to establish a system highly advantageous to mankind. Now the Christian religion is a most beneficial system, as it gives us light and certainty where we were before in darkness and doubt. The miracles which prove it are attested by men who had no interest in deceiving

us, but who, on the contrary, were told that they should suffer persecution, and did actually lay down their lives in confirmation of the truth of the facts which they asserted. Indeed, for some centuries the heathens did not pretend to deny the miracles, but said they were performed by the aid of evil spirits. This is a circumstance of great weight. Then, sir, when we take the proofs derived from prophecies which have been so exactly fulfilled we have most satisfactory evidence. Supposing a miracle possible, as to which, in my opinion, there can be no doubt, we have as strong evidence for the miracles in support of Christianity as the nature of the thing admits. . . . As to the Christian religion, sir, besides the strong evidence which we have for it, there is a balance in its favor from the number of great men who have been convinced of its truth after a serious consideration of the question. Grotius was an acute man, a lawyer, a man accustomed to examine evidence, and he was convinced. Grotius was not a recluse, but a man of the

world, who certainly had no bias to the side of religion. Sir Isaac Newton set out an infidel, and came to be a very firm believer."

He is speaking of the young: "Sir, I love the acquaintance of young people, because, in the first place, I don't like to think myself growing old. In the next place, young acquaintances must last longest if they do last; and then, sir, young men have more virtue than old men; they have more generous sentiments in every respect. I love the young dogs of this age; they have more wit and humor and knowledge of life than we had; but then the dogs are not so good scholars.* Sir, in my early years I read very hard. It is a sad reflection, but a true one, that I knew almost as much at eighteen as I do now. My judgment, to be sure, was not so good; but I had all the facts. I remember very well, when I was at Oxford, an old man said to me, "Young man, ply your

* Wesley also loved young men, but for a somewhat different reason, namely, that they might be preaching the Gospel after he himself would be in his grave.

book diligently now, and acquire a stock of knowledge; for when years come upon you you will find that poring upon books will be but an irksome task." *

* All this is unguarded. Such remarks may have been true of Johnson, but they are not so of one out of a million others. The mind being preserved, healthy, vigorous, and diligent, will increase in knowledge as well as in judgment throughout its threescore and ten years, and beyond.

CHAPTER XIV.

Boswell thus describes briefly the library of Johnson as it was at this time: "It was contained in two garrets over his chambers, where Lintot, son of the celebrated bookseller of that name, had formerly his warehouse. I found a number of good books, but very dusty and in great confusion. The floor was strewed with manuscript leaves in Johnson's own handwriting, which I beheld with a degree of veneration, supposing they perhaps might contain portions of "The Rambler," or of "Rasselas." I observed an apparatus for chemical experiments, of which Johnson all his life was very fond. The place seemed to be favorable for retirement and meditation." Johnson, when he wished to study without interruption, would steal up to his library without the knowledge of his servant, "for he would not allow his servant to say he was not at home when he

really was. 'A servant's strict regard for truth,' said he, 'must be weakened by such a practice. A philosopher may know that it is merely a form of denial; but few servants are such nice distinguishers. If I accustom a servant to tell a lie for *me*, have I not reason to apprehend that he will tell many lies for *himself?*'" *

On one of the bright days of this summer, and just before Boswell was to start on his European tour, he accompanies Johnson on a little excursion down the Thames to Greenwich. A boy rows "the sculler," and as they glide over the waters they converse meanwhile.

Boswell. Do you really think a knowledge of the Greek and Latin languages is an essential requisite to a good education?

Johnson. Most certainly, sir; for those who know them have a very great advantage over those who do not. Nay, sir, it is wonderful what a difference learning makes upon people

* This was all right; but was it any better than the habit of honest old Prof. Stuart, of Andover, who, we believe, gave the whole world to understand plainly that during his prescribed hours of study he was accessible to no mortal?

even in the common intercourse of life, which does not appear to be much connected with it.

B. And yet people go through the world very well, and carry on the business of life to good advantage without learning.

J. Why, sir, that may be true in cases where learning cannot possibly be of any use. For instance, this boy rows us as well without learning as if he could sing the song of Orpheus to the Argonauts, who were the first sailors. Boy, what would you give, my lad, to know about the Argonauts?

Boy. Sir, I would give what I have.

J. (Much pleased.) Sir, (to Boswell,) a desire of knowledge is the natural feeling of mankind; and every human being whose mind is not debauched will be willing to give all that he has to get knowledge.

Arriving, they are greatly entertained with the immense number and variety of ships that were lying at anchor, and with the beautiful country on each side of the river.

But even amid all this interesting scenery

they persist in "holding high converse" on one and another topic.

"I talked," says Boswell, "of preaching, and of the great success which those called Methodists have."

J. Sir, it is owing to their expressing themselves in a plain and familiar manner, which is the only way to do good to the common people, and which clergymen of genius and learning ought to do from a principle of duty when it is suited to their congregations, a practice for which they will be praised by men of sense. To insist against drunkenness as a crime because it debases reason, the noblest faculty of man, would be of no service to the common people; but to tell them that they may die in a fit of drunkenness, and show them how dreadful that would be, cannot fail to make a deep impression. Sir, when your Scotch clergy give up their homely manner, religion will soon decay in that country."

Thus they passed the day—Johnson now criticising the hospital, and now the poetry of

Buchanan, and now advising his friend as to his more appropriate course of study, when the great man, says Boswell, "rises into an animating blaze of eloquence which roused every intellectual power in me to the highest pitch, but must have dazzled me so much that my memory could not preserve the substance of his discourse. He ran over the grand scale of human knowledge, advised me to select some particular branch to excel in, but to acquire a little of every kind."

At evening they walked in the Park, comparing its beautiful scenery with the pent-up city and its intellectual delights, and pronounced in favor of the latter. Then, at night, they returned up river to London, Boswell shivering amid the cold night air, and Johnson, meanwhile, scolding and taunting him as if his shivering were a paltry effeminacy.

They concluded the day at a coffee house "very socially." Boswell details to Johnson a particular account of his family and hereditary establishment, Johnson asking divers questions

and making sundry calculations and recommendations; and as Boswell describes the romantic seat of his ancestors, the sage listens with delight. "I must be there, sir," he says, "and we will live in the old castle, and if there is not a room in it remaining we will build one." The youth is highly flattered and elated, and could hardly indulge the hope that Auchinleck* would indeed be so honored by Samuel Johnson.

All this transpired on a certain Saturday, and, on the following Friday, Boswell was to start for the continent. As they parted that night, "I must see you out of England," said Johnson; "I will accompany you to Harwich." Boswell is much surprised at this unexpected and very great mark of his affectionate regard.

And multitudes, we think, must have been surprised and deeply interested at contemplating this curious friendship of Samuel Johnson and James Boswell. The picture is certainly beautiful, and would be perfect were we im-

* Name of Boswell's ancestral seat.

pressed that the youth was worthy of such an alliance. But we cannot lose sight of the defects and foibles of this young man, Boswell, nor cease to wonder that a philosopher mature in age, of vast knowledge, magnificent powers, and of illustrious name, should consent to adopt as a son and take to his warm heart this fair-haired Scottish stranger. Apart from any personal qualities or accomplishments, is it not a fair suspicion that Johnson's acknowledged *deference to rank* was considerably concerned with this curious partiality? James Boswell was prospectively one of the Lairds of Scotland, with an honored ancestry, hereditary estates, and a more or less numerous tenantry. Had all this no influence on the imagination of the great Johnson? And while Boswell felt himself specially flattered by the friendship of the philosopher, was there no reciprocation of all this on the part of the latter? One can hardly help inquiring what, James Boswell being just what he was, his birth excepted, would have been his relation to Samuel Johnson? Would

these two, or would they not, have been thus wedded in mutual, intimate, and life-long fellowship? If Boswell worshiped Johnson's greatness, was there with Johnson no worship of Boswell's social position? and did not the prestige of this, to no inconsiderable extent, go to cover, in Johnson's mind, faults and failings that otherwise had, to his discerning eye, been conspicuous and repulsive?*

Boswell now left London by stage-coach for Harwich to embark for the continent. He was accompanied, as promised, by Johnson, and, at a tavern where they dined, a lady, one of their fellow-passengers, was remarking that she had done her best to educate her children, and particularly that she had never suffered them to be a moment idle. Johnson replied, "I wish, madam, you would educate me too, for I have been an idle fellow all my life." "I am sure," said she, "you have not been idle." Nay,

* Dr. Curry, in his admirable serial published a few years ago in the "National Magazine," presents a different theory of this strange friendship, a sort of theory of "opposites," which may have been the true one.

madam," said Johnson, "it is very true; and that gentleman there (pointing to Boswell) has been idle. He was idle at Edinburgh. His father sent him to Glasgow, where he continued to be idle; and now he is going to Utrecht, where he will be as idle as ever."

At Harwich the two friends parted, Boswell to sail for Utrecht, and Johnson to return to London.

CHAPTER XV.

It appears that Johnson was strong as a writer and conversationist; but he was a strong *eater* as well. While at supper, the evening previous to Boswell's departure for the continent, the two conversed "with uncommon satisfaction" on the subject of good eating. Johnson remarked that some people had a foolish way of not minding, or pretending not to mind, what they eat, and adds, "For my part, I mind my belly very studiously and very carefully; for I look upon it that he who does not mind his belly will hardly mind any thing else."

Alluding to this conversation, Boswell proceeds to tell us of Johnson's general manner of eating, and matters appertaining.

"I never knew any man who relished good eating more than he did. When at table he was totally absorbed in the business of the moment; his looks seemed riveted to his plate;

nor would he, unless when in very high company, say one word, or even pay the least attention to what was said by others till he had satisfied his appetite, which was so fierce, and indulged with such intenseness, that while in the act of eating the veins of his forehead swelled, and generally a strong perspiration was visible. To those whose sensations were delicate this could not but be disgusting; and it was doubtless not very suitable to the character of a philosopher, who should be distinguished by self-command. But it must be owned that Johnson, though he could be rigidly *abstemious*, was not a *temperate* man either in eating or drinking. He could refrain, but he could not use moderately. He told me that he had fasted two days without inconvenience, and that he had never been hungry but once. They who beheld with wonder how much he eat upon all occasions when his dinner was to his taste, could not easily conceive what he must have meant by hunger; and not only was he remarkable for the extraordinary quan-

tity which he eat, but he was, or affected to be, a man of very nice discernment in the science of cookery. He used to descant critically on the dishes which had been at table where he had dined or supped, and to recollect very minutely what he had liked. . . . When invited to dine, even with an intimate friend, he was not pleased if something better than a plain dinner was not prepared for him. I have heard him say on such an occasion, 'This was a good dinner enough, to be sure; but it was not a dinner to *ask* a man to.' On the other hand, he was wont to express with great glee his satisfaction when he had been entertained quite to his mind. One day, when he had dined with his neighbor and landlord in Bolt-court, Mr. Allen, the printer, whose old housekeeper had studied his taste in every thing, he pronounced this eulogy: 'Sir, we could not have had a better dinner had there been a synod of cooks.'"

Apropos to all this, another familiar acquaintance remarks that "Johnson's notions

about eating, however, were nothing less than delicate; a leg of pork boiled till it dropped from the bone, a veal pie with plums and sugar, or the outside cut of a salt buttock of beef, were his favorite dainties. With regard to drink, his liking was for the strongest, as it was not the flavor but the effect he sought for and professed to desire; and when Mrs. Piozzi first knew him he used to pour capillaire into his Port wine. For the last twelve years, however, he left off all fermented liquors. To make himself some amends, indeed, he took his chocolate liberally, pouring in large quantities of cream, or even melted butter; and was so fond of fruit, that though he would eat seven or eight large peaches of a morning before breakfast began, and treated them with proportionate attention after dinner again, yet he has been heard to protest that he never had quite as much as he wished of wall-fruit except once in his life."

And yet this same man, Johnson, was ready to ridicule those who sympathized with his

views of eating. When one such observed that he who dressed a good dinner was a more excellent and a more useful member of society than he who wrote a good poem, Dr. Johnson said in reply, "In this opinion all the dogs in the town will join you."

He used often to say "that wherever the dinner is ill got up there is poverty, or there is avarice, or there is stupidity; in short, the family is somehow grossly wrong; for," continued he, "a man seldom thinks with more earnestness of any thing than he does of his dinner; and if he cannot get that well dressed, he should be suspected of inaccuracy in other things."

A lady having asked him if he ever huffed his wife about his dinner, "So often," replied he, "that at last she called to me when about to say grace, and said, 'Nay, hold, Mr. Johnson, and do not make a farce of thanking God for a dinner which in a few minutes you will pronounce not eatable."

So much may suffice to record of Johnson's

appetite, manner of eating, and sentiments generally in respect to such matters. That he was a huge *animal*, as well as an intellectual giant, is well understood; while the above quotations are presented as a matter of curiosity, and not at all as adding any dignity or beauty to his general character. Indeed, it was one of the contradictions so characteristic of Johnson that when, in a certain mood, he would assume opposite sentiments in relation to the subject of the appetite, and talk loudly and with great contempt of people who, like himself, were anxious to gratify their palates. The following sentiments, from the two hundred and sixth number of his "Rambler," will sufficiently illustrate the above statement, and will answer as a fitting conclusion of this not very agreeable chapter. He is ridiculing a fancied character whom he names Gulosulus, and descants thus:

"By this method of life Gulosulus has so impressed on his imagination the dignity of feasting that he has no other topic of talk or

subject of meditation. His calendar is a bill of fare; he measures the year by successive dainties. The only commonplaces of his memory are his meals; and if you ask him at what time an event happened, he considers whether he heard it after a dinner of turbot or venison. He knows, indeed, that those who value themselves upon sense, learning, or piety, speak of him with contempt; but he considers them as wretches, envious or ignorant, who do not know his happiness, or wish to supplant him; and declares to his friends that he is fully satisfied with his own conduct, since he has fed every day on twenty dishes, and yet doubled his estate."

CHAPTER XVI.

One or two other peculiarities of Johnson may properly be noticed here.

Of his tendencies to hypochondria mention has been already made. This disorder seems always to have been lurking about him, and at this time of his life (fifty-five) he experienced an attack far more severe than ordinary. He was so ill as, notwithstanding his remarkable love of company, to be entirely averse to society. One of his friends, on visiting him, found him "in a deplorable state, sighing, groaning, talking to himself, and restlessly walking from room to room. He then used this emphatical expression of the misery which he felt: 'I would consent to have a limb amputated to recover my spirits.'"

This "talking to himself" was another of his singularities, and was not at all confined, with him, to times of illness. He was fre-

quently overheard uttering pious ejaculations, fragments of the Lord's prayer, and, now and then, passages from the classics, with which few men of his time were more familiar.

Another of his peculiarities may be best stated in Boswell's own words :

"It appeared to me some superstitious habit which he had contracted early, and from which he had never called upon his reason to disentangle him. This was his anxious care to go out or in at a door or passage by a certain point, or, at least, so as that either his right or his left foot (I am not certain which) should constantly make the first actual movement when he came close to the door or passage. Thus I conjecture ; for I have, upon innumerable occasions, observed him suddenly stop, and then seem to count his steps with a deep earnestness ; and when he had neglected or gone wrong in this sort of magical movement I have seen him go back again, put himself in a proper posture to begin the ceremony, and, having

gone through it, break from his abstraction, walk briskly on, and join his companion."

Kindred to the above is the following anecdote:

Johnson is on his way to dine with Sheridan, and must pass a certain number of stone posts. Says one who is watching him unperceived, "Upon every post, as he passed along, I could observe he deliberately laid his hand; but missing one of them, when he had got at some distance he suddenly seemed to recollect himself, and immediately returning back, carefully performed the accustomed ceremony, and resumed his former course, not omitting one till he gained the crossing. This, Mr. Sheridan assured me, however odd it might appear, was his constant practice, but why or wherefore he could not inform me."

"When he walked the streets, what with the constant roll of his head, and the concomitant motion of his body, he appeared to make his way by that motion independent of his feet. That he was often much stared at while he ad-

vanced in this manner may easily be believed; but it was not safe to make sport of one so robust as he was. Mr. Langton saw him one day, in a fit of absence, by a sudden start, drive the load off a porter's back, and walk forward briskly, without being conscious of what he had done. The porter was very angry, but stood still, and eyed the huge figure with much earnestness, till he was satisfied that his wisest course was to be quiet, and take up his burden again."

Still other peculiarities characterized Johnson's appearance and words. But Boswell must sketch for us here also:

"While talking, or even musing, as he sat in his chair, he commonly held his head to one side toward his right shoulder, and shook it in a tremulous manner, moving his body backward and forward, and rubbing his left knee in the same direction with the palm of his hand. In the intervals of articulating he made various sounds with his mouth; sometimes as if ruminating, or what is called chewing the cud,

sometimes giving a half whistle, sometimes making his tongue play backward from the roof of his mouth as if clucking like a hen, and sometimes protruding it against his upper gums in front, as if pronouncing quickly under his breath, *too, too, too;* all this accompanied, sometimes, with a thoughtful look, but more frequently with a smile. Generally, when he had concluded a period, in the course of a dispute, by which time he was a good deal exhausted by violence and vociferation, he used to blow out his breath like a whale. This, I suppose, was a relief to his lungs, and seemed in him to be a contemptuous mode of expression, as if he had made the arguments of his opponent fly like chaff before the wind."

Miss Reynolds, daughter of Sir Joshua Reynolds, gives us the following ludicrous description of Johnson's "extraordinary gestures or antics with his hands and feet, particularly when passing over the threshold of a door, or rather before he would venture to pass through any doorway. On entering Sir Joshua's house

with poor Mrs. Williams, a blind lady who lived with him, he would quit her hand, or else whirl her about on the steps as he whirled and twisted about to perform his gesticulations, and as soon as he had finished he would give a sudden spring, and make such an extensive stride over the threshold, as if he was trying for a wager how far he could stride ; Mrs. Williams standing groping about outside the door, unless the servant took hold of her hand to conduct her in, leaving Dr. Johnson to perform at the parlor door much the same exercise over again."

The same writer adds, "But it was not only at the entrance of a door that he exhibited such strange maneuvers, but across a room, or in the street with company, he has stopped on a sudden, as if he had recollected his task, and began to perform it there, gathering a mob round him ; and, when he had finished, would hasten to his companion (who probably had walked on before) with an air of great satisfaction that he had done his duty!

"On Sunday morning, as I was walking with him in Twickenham meadows, he began his antics both with his feet and hands; with the latter as if he was holding the reins of a horse, like a jockey in full speed. But to describe the strange positions of his feet is a difficult task; sometimes he would make the back part of his heels to touch, sometimes his toes, as if he was aiming at making the form of a triangle, at least the two sides of one. Though, indeed, whether these were his gestures on this particular occasion in Twickenham meadows I do not recollect, it is so long since; but I well remember that they were so extraordinary that men, women, and children gathered round him, laughing. At last we sat down on some logs of wood by the river side, and they nearly dispersed; when he pulled out of his pocket Grotius *de Veritate Religionis*, over which he seesawed at such a violent rate as to excite the curiosity of some people at a distance to come and see what was the matter with him."

Another lady, Madam D'Arblay, thus writes:

"The Doctor is indeed very ill-favored! Yet he has naturally a noble figure; tall, stout, grand, and authoritative; but he stoops horribly; his back is quite round; his mouth is continually opening and shutting, as if he were chewing something; he has a singular method of twirling his fingers and twisting his hands; his vast body is in constant agitation, seesawing backward and forward; his feet are never a moment quiet; and his whole great person looked often as if it were going to roll itself quite voluntarily from the chair to the floor."

Macaulay's summing up very properly concludes the present chapter:

"Johnson grown old, Johnson in the fullness of his fame, and in the enjoyment of a competent fortune, is better known to us than any other man in history. Every thing about him, his coat, his wig, his figure, his face, his scrofula, his St. Vitus's dance, his rolling walk, his blinking eye, the outward signs which too clearly marked his approbation of his dinner, his insatiable appetite for fish sauce and veal-pie with

plums, his inextinguishable thirst for tea, his trick of touching the posts as he walked, his mysterious practice of treasuring up scraps of orange peel, his morning slumbers, his midnight disputations, his contortions, his mutterings, his gruntings, his vigorous, acute, and ready eloquence, his sarcastic wit, his vehemence, his insolence, his fits of tempestuous rage, his queer inmates, (old Mr. Levett and blind Mrs. Williams, the cat Hodge, and the negro Frank,) all are as familiar to us as the objects by which we have been surrounded from childhood."

CHAPTER XVII.

A FEW months after Boswell's departure he receives a letter from Johnson, from which we give a few extracts, furnishing hints as appropriate and useful to the present generation of students as they were a hundred years ago. After commending Boswell to the study of the civil law and the ancient languages, he thus proceeds:

"At least resolve, while you remain in any settled residence, to spend a certain number of hours every day among your books. The dissipation of thought of which you complain is nothing more than the vacillation of a mind suspended between different motives, and changing its direction as any motive gains or loses strength. If you can but kindle in your mind any strong desire, if you can but keep predominant any wish for some particular excellence or attainment, the gusts of imagination will break

away, without any effect upon your conduct, and commonly without any traces left upon the memory.

"There lurks, perhaps, in every human heart a desire of distinction, which inclines every man first to hope, and then to believe, that nature has given him something peculiar to himself."

Then referring to a gentleman—a mutual acquaintance of theirs—as an illustration, he proceeds: "Vacant to every object, and sensible of every impulse, he thought that all appearance of diligence would deduct something from the reputation of genius, and hoped that he should appear to attain amid all the ease of carelessness and all the tumults of diversion, that knowledge and those accomplishments which mortals of the common fabric obtain only by mute abstraction and solitary drudgery. He tried this scheme of life awhile, but was made weary of it by his sense and his virtue; he then wished to return to his studies; and finding long habits of idleness and pleasure harder to

be cured than he expected, still willing to retain his claim to some extraordinary prerogatives, resolved the common consequences of irregularity into an unalterable decree of destiny, and concluded that nature had originally formed him incapable of rational employment.

"Let all such fancies, illusive and destructive, be banished henceforward from your thoughts forever. Resolve, and keep your resolution; choose, and pursue your choice. If you spend this day in study, you will find yourself still more able to study to-morrow; not that you are to expect that you shall, at once, obtain a complete victory. Depravity is not very easily overcome. Resolution will sometimes relax, and diligence will sometimes be interrupted; but let no accidental surprise or deviation, whether short or long, dispose you to despondency. Consider these failings as incident to all mankind. Begin again where you left off, and endeavor to avoid the seducements that prevailed over you before."

This may be the appropriate place to sub-

join further sentiments and hints of a kindred character.

To a student at Oxford Johnson writes: "I suppose you pursue your studies diligently, and diligence will seldom fail of success. Do not tire yourself so much with Greek one day as to be afraid of looking on it the next, but give it a certain portion of time, suppose four hours, and pass the rest of the day in Latin or English. I would have you learn French, and take in a literary journal once a month, which will accustom you to various subjects, and inform you what learning is going forward in the world. Do not omit to mingle some lighter books with those of more importance; that which is read *remisso animo* is often of great use, and takes great hold of the remembrance. However, take what course you will, if you be diligent you will be a scholar."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE religious character, expressions, and confessions of Johnson along this period of his life will be no uninteresting inquiry to such as would adequately appreciate the man.

Let us glance, then, at a few inquiries of his touching this grave subject. It is the spring of 1764.

"I have made no reformation; I have lived totally useless, more sensual in thought, and more addicted to wine and meat. . . . My indolence, since my last reception of the sacrament, has sunk into grosser sluggishness, and my dissipation spread into wilder negligence. My thoughts have been clouded with sensuality; and, except that from the beginning of this year, I have, in some measure, forborne excess of strong drink, my appetites have predominated over my reason. A kind of strange oblivion has overspread me, so that I know not what

has become of the last year, and perceive that incidents and intelligence pass over me without leaving any impression. This is not the life to which heaven is promised."

He earnestly resolves to amend. "I went to church; came in at the first of the Psalms, and endeavored to attend the service, which I went through without perturbation. After sermon I recommended Tetty, in a prayer, by herself, and my father, mother, brother, and Bathurst, in another. I did it only once, so far as it might be lawful for me. . . . I then prayed for resolution and perseverance to amend my life. I received [communed] soon. The communicants were many. At the altar it occurred to me that I ought to form some resolutions. I resolved in the presence of God, but without a vow, to repel sinful thoughts, to study eight hours daily, and, I think, to go to church every Sunday, and read the Scriptures. I gave a shilling; and seeing a poor girl at the sacrament in a bedgown, gave her privately a crown. . . . . Came home and prayed."

"I have now spent fifty-five years in resolving; having, from the earliest time, almost, that I can remember, been forming schemes of a better life. I have done nothing. The need of doing, therefore, is pressing, since the time of doing is short. O God, grant me to resolve aright, and to keep my resolutions, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

"I purpose again to partake of the blessed sacrament; yet when I consider how vainly I have hitherto resolved, at this annual commemoration of my Saviour's death, to regulate my life by his laws, I am almost afraid to renew my resolutions.

"Since the last Easter I have reformed no evil habit; my time has been unprofitably spent, and seems as a dream that has left nothing behind. My memory grows confused, and I know not how the days pass over me. Good Lord, deliver me!"

"I purpose to rise at eight, because, though I shall not yet rise early, it will be much earlier than I now rise, for I often lie till two; and it

will gain me much time, and tend to a conquest over idleness, and give time for other duties. I hope to rise yet earlier.

"I invited home with me the man whose pious behavior I had for several years observed on this day, and found him a kind of Methodist; full of texts, but ill-instructed. I talked to him with temper, and offered him twice wine, which he refused. . . . Let me not be prejudiced, hereafter, against the appearance of piety in mean persons, who, with indeterminate, and perverse or inelegant conversation, perhaps are doing all they can."

He here speaks of "a kind of Methodist," and the consideration necessary in behalf of ignorant Christians. Let us directly here introduce another Methodist, and collate his religious experience with that of Johnson as intimated in the above entries, two experiences about the same time, and almost in the same neighborhood. The biographer of Fletcher of Madeley thus writes of him: "His closet was the favorite retirement, to which he constantly

retreated whenever his public duties allowed him a season of leisure. Here he was privily hidden, as in the presence of God. Here he would patiently wait for, or joyfully triumph in, the loving-kindness of the Lord. Here he would plunge himself into the depths of humiliation; and from hence, at other seasons, as from another Pisgah, he would take a large survey of the vast inheritance which is reserved for the saints. . . . While it is here recorded that this faithful servant of God was accustomed to *pray* without *ceasing*, it must be noted at the same time, as a distinguishing part of his character, that *in every thing he gave thanks.* His heart was always in a grateful frame, and it was his chief delight to *honor* God by *offering him thanks and praise.* Frequently, when he has been engaged in recounting the gracious dealings of God with respect to himself, or his signal favors conferred upon the Church, he has broken out in a strain of holy rejoicing: 'O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and declare the wonders that

he doeth for the children of men!' He considered every unexpected turn of Providence as a manifestation of his Father's good pleasure, and discerned causes of thanksgiving, either obvious or latent, in every occurrence. Thus, either in the expectation or in the possession of promised mercies, he 'rejoiced evermore.' The immediate causes of his joy were manifold, public and private, spiritual and temporal; but they were all swallowed up in the advancement of Christ's kingdom upon earth. This he considered as a subject of universal rejoicing, and for this he more especially desired to 'praise the name of God with a song, and to magnify it with thanksgiving.'"

Such are the two "experiences"—experiences contemporaneous, yet widely different. If the careful and thoughtful reader shall compare the two, must not his conclusion be that the former belongs to a man of weak and tremulous faith, and who trod the Christian path with faltering steps, while the latter was the experience of a man strong in the Lord and

in the power of his might, and who followed the Master wholly?

In this connection we append the following judicious remarks of Johnson bearing upon the great Christian question:

"For revealed religion," he said, "there was such historical evidence as, upon any subject not religious, would have left no doubt. Had the facts recorded in the New Testament been mere civil occurrences, no one would have called in question the testimony by which they are established. But the importance annexed to them, amounting to nothing less than the salvation of mankind, raised a cloud in our minds, and created doubts unknown upon any other subject." Of proofs to be derived from history, one of the most cogent, he seemed to think, was the opinion so well authenticated, and so long entertained, of a Deliverer that was to appear about that time. Among the typical representations, the sacrifice of the paschal lamb, in which no bone was to be broken, had early struck his mind. For the immediate

life and miracles of Christ, such attestation as that of the Apostles, who all, except St. John, confirmed their testimony with their blood—such belief as these witnesses procured from a people best furnished with the means of judging, and least disposed to judge favorably—such an extension afterward of that belief over all the nations of the earth, though originating from a nation of all others most despised, would leave no doubt that the things witnessed were true, and were of a nature more than human. With respect to evidence, Dr. Johnson observed that we had not "such evidence that Cesar died in the Capitol as that Christ died in the manner related."

CHAPTER XIX.

In 1765, and at the age of fifty-six, Johnson was honored by Trinity College, Dublin, with the highest academical honors, receiving from that college the degree of Doctor of Laws. Ten years afterward he received the same honor from the University of Oxford. Henceforth, therefore, he may claim, and very deservedly, to be entitled *Dr. Johnson*, although it is asserted that he never, himself, used the title even after his Oxford degree.

This same year was also distinguished by his introduction to the family of Mr. Thrale, "one of the most eminent brewers in England, and member of Parliament for the borough of Southwark."

Johnson's introduction to this family transpired as follows:

"Mr. Murphy, who was intimate with Mr. Thrale, having spoken very highly of Dr. John-

son, he was requested to make them acquainted. This being mentioned to Johnson he accepted of an invitation to dinner at Thrale's, and was so much pleased with his reception, both by Mr. and Mrs. Thrale, and they were so much pleased with him, that his invitations to their house were more and more frequent, till at last he became one of the family, and an apartment was apropriated to him, both in their house at Southwark and in their villa at Streatham."

Under these circumstances a slight sketch of these new friends of Johnson is proper to be given. Mr. Thrale, then, is described as "a man of excellent principles, a good scholar, well-skilled in trade, of a sound understanding, and of manners such as presented the character of a plain independent English 'squire." In person he was tall, well-proportioned, and stately. He evinced a noble and generous bearing, and "gave his wife a liberal indulgence both in the choice of their company and in the mode of entertaining them."

Mrs. Thrale is represented as short in stature, yet well-rounded, and animated and sprightly in her movements; or, in the more concise language of Johnson, she was "short, plump, and brisk."

She was a lady of lively talents improved by education, and Johnson testifies that "if she was not the wisest woman in the world, she was undoubtedly one of the wittiest." She shone in conversation, was a poetess of no mean pretensions, and was, at the time when Johnson entered the family, about twenty-seven years of age.

"Nothing," says Boswell, "could be more fortunate for Johnson than this connection. He had at Mr. Thrale's all the comforts, and even luxuries, of life. His melancholy was diverted, and his irregular habits lessened, by association with an agreeable and well-ordered family. He was treated with the utmost respect, and even affection. The vivacity of Mrs. Thrale's literary talk roused him to cheerfulness and exertion, even when they were alone.

But this was not often the case; for he found here a constant succession of what gave him the highest enjoyment — the society of the learned, the witty, and the eminent in every way, who were assembled in numerous companies, called forth his wonderful powers, and gratified him with admiration, to which no man could be insensible."

Another writer adds that he "formed at Streatham a room for a library, and increased by his recommendation the number of books. Here he was to be found (himself a library) when a friend called upon him; and by him the friend was sure to be introduced to the dinner table, which Mrs. Thrale knew how to spread with the utmost plenty and elegance, and which was often adorned with such guests that to dine there was *epulis accumbere divûm*." *

Here also, at Streatham, "he had opportunities of exercise, and the pleasure of airings and excursions. In the exercise of a coach he

* "To recline at the feasts of the gods."

had great delight; it afforded him the indulgence of indolent postures, and, as it seems, the noise of it assisted his hearing."

What seems to us more strange, he was even prevailed on by Mr. Thrale "to join in the pleasures of the chase, in which he showed himself a bold rider; for he either leaped, or broke through, the hedges that obstructed him. This he did, not because he was eager in the pursuit, but, as he said, to save the trouble of alighting and remounting. He did not derive the pleasure or benefit from riding that many do; it had no tendency to raise his spirits; and he once said that in a journey on horseback he fell asleep." And, generally of the amusement of hunting, he confesses as follows: "I have now learned by hunting to perceive that it is no diversion at all, nor ever takes a man out of himself for a moment. The dogs have less sagacity than I could have prevailed on myself to suppose, and the gentlemen often called to me not to ride over them. It is very strange and very melancholy, that the paucity of human

pleasures should persuade us ever to call hunting one of them." *

As Boswell suggests, this new arrangement of Johnson with the Thrales must have proved greatly pleasant and advantageous to him. To become a most welcome inmate in a family of worth, wealth, and refinement, where he was greatly loved and respected, amid books and literary friends, and where his social nature could be gratified to the utmost, and where he literally "fared sumptuously every day," all this presents to us a picture delightful to contemplate.

Exalted now to elevated literary distinction, and blessed, by his pension, with an assured competence, he, at the age of fifty-six, and after

* The editor of this work is obliged to confess to a most perfect sympathy with this sentiment. How it is that even sensible and good men can find diversion in hunting and running down by horses and dogs, and wantonly killing, various innoxious animals, seems one of the mysteries which find their explanation only in the depravity of our fallen nature. In the name of goodness and mercy, are there not abundant modes of amusement without extorting it from suffering, agony, and death?

long years of struggle with poverty and disappointment, finds a welcome entrance, at his pleasure, within this elegant and peaceful asylum, as when a weary mariner, tossed over all seas and battered by many a storm, glides into some long-desired haven and finds rest at last. Surely it would seem that some entry of his should meet us here expressive of exalted thanksgiving.

Instead of this, however, we have from Mrs. Thrale a notice which impresses us less pleasantly. "Mr. Johnson liked his new acquaintance so much, however, that from that time he dined with us every Thursday through the winter, and in the autumn of the next year he followed us to Brighthelmstone, whence we were gone before his arrival; so he was disappointed and enraged, and wrote us a letter expressive of anger, which we were desirous to pacify, and to obtain his company again if possible. Mr. Murphy brought him back to us again very kindly."

Improper and unreasonable anger has, in

countless instances, resulted, providentially, in disastrous consequences. Who shall say that a specimen may not be discerned immediately on the occasion of his return to the Thrales? For, soon, "his health, which he had always complained of, grew so exceedingly bad that he could not stir out of his room, in the court he inhabited, for many weeks together, I think months. . . . He often lamented to us the horrible condition of his mind, which, he said, was nearly distracted."

He rallied at length, however; and, under the assiduous and judicious care of Mrs. Thrale, was restored to his usual health.

The reader will not understand here that Dr. Johnson made his home exclusively at Mr. Thrale's. He had also his own establishment in London, of which we have the following picture: "I returned to London in February, and found Dr. Johnson in a good house in Johnson's Court, Fleet-street, in which he had accommodated Miss Williams with an apartment on the ground floor, while Mr. Levett occupied

his post in the garret; his faithful Francis was still attending upon him. An upper room, which had the advantages of a good light and free air, he fitted up for a study, and furnished with books, chosen with so little regard to editions or their external appearance as showed they were intended for use, and that he disdained the ostentation of learning. Here he was in a situation and circumstances that enabled him to enjoy the visits of his friends, and to receive them in a manner suitable to the rank and condition of many of them. A silver standish, and some useful plate, which he had been prevailed on to accept as pledges of kindness from some who most esteemed him, together with furniture that would not have disgraced a better dwelling, banished those appearances of squalid indigence which, in his less happy days, disgusted those who came to see him."

CHAPTER XX.

SIMULTANEOUSLY with the pleasant arrangement described in the preceding chapter, Dr. Johnson seems to have given the world his edition of Shakspeare. As we have already seen, this work was commenced nine years before; when subscriptions were taken for it and paid for, with the understanding, of course, that the new edition would be promptly completed and issued. But, contrary to the reasonable expectations of his friends, this edition of "Shakspeare's Dramatic Works, with Notes" proved a drudgery instead of a pleasure to Johnson. And thus the matter lingered along for years, and might have lingered still longer had he not been sharply stirred up by the knife of Churchill's satire, as already quoted on pages 112, 113. This satire, if it had no other effect, yet brought to remembrance that his edition of Shakspeare had long been due. "His friends

took the alarm, and, by all the arts of reasoning and persuasion, labored to convince him that, having taken subscriptions for a work in which he had made no progress, his credit was at stake. He confessed he was culpable, and promised, from time to time, to begin a course of such reading as was necessary to qualify him for the work; this was no more than he had formerly done in an engagement with Coxeter, to whom he had bound himself to write the life of Shakspeare; but he never could be prevailed on to begin it, so that even now it was questioned whether his promises were to be relied on. For this reason Sir Joshua Reynolds, and some other of his friends who were more concerned for his reputation than himself seemed to be, contrived to entangle him by a wager, or some other pecuniary engagement, to perform his task by a certain time."

Johnson's comments upon the great dramatist were meager and barely respectable. His researches were not so ample and his investigations so acute as they might have been. In

fact, in view of the prodigious amount of Shakspearean literature brought out in the last and the present centuries, the work of Johnson dwindles into insignificance. Even a hundred years ago, when it first appeared it could have added but little to his fame, while a late critic affirms its value to be in inverse proportion to the reputation of its editor.

Boswell is highly elated in detailing what he terms one of the most remarkable incidents of Johnson's life, and which occurred about the time of which we are writing. This was nothing more nor less than Johnson's being honored with an interview with his majesty, George III. It appears that the philosopher was in the habit of visiting the library at the Queen-house. The librarian was careful to afford him every accommodation that could contribute to his ease and convenience while there, so that this became to him a very agreeable place of resort for his leisure hours.

"His Majesty, having been informed of his occasional visits, was pleased to signify a desire

that he should be told when Dr. Johnson came next to the library. Accordingly, the next time that Johnson did come, as soon as he was fairly engaged with a book, on which, while he sat by the fire, he seemed quite intent, Mr. Barnard, the librarian, stole round to the apartment where the King was, and, in obedience to his Majesty's commands, mentioned that Dr. Johnson was then in the library. His Majesty said he was at leisure, and would go to him ; upon which Mr. Barnard took one of the candles that stood on the King's table and lighted his Majesty through a suite of rooms, till they came to a private door into the library, of which his Majesty had the key. Being entered, Mr. Barnard stepped forward hastily to Dr. Johnson, who was still in a profound study, and whispered to him, "Sir, here is the King." Johnson started up and stood still. His Majesty approached him, and at once was courteously easy."

Inasmuch as we republicans are but little accustomed to "stand before kings" and hear

them converse, let us listen to the veritable dialogue that occurred in this library between George III. and Dr. Johnson:

King. I understand that you come sometimes to the library. I hear, Doctor, that you have lately visited Oxford; are you fond of going thither?

Johnson. I am, indeed, fond of going to Oxford sometimes; but I am likewise glad to come back again.

K. What are they doing at Oxford?

J. I cannot much commend their diligence; but they have mended in some respects, for they have put their press under better regulations, and are at this time printing Polybius.*

K. Which of the two libraries is the best, that of Oxford or Cambridge?

J. I believe the Bodleian is larger than any they have at Cambridge. But I hope, whether we have more books or not than they have at Cambridge, we shall make as good use of them as they do.

* One of the Greek historians, who died B. C. 122.

K. Is the library of All-Souls or Christ Church, the largest?

J. All-Souls Library is the largest we have except the Bodleian.

K. Are you writing any thing now, Doctor?

J. I am not; I have pretty well told the world what I know, and must now read to acquire more knowledge.

K. I do not think you borrow much from any body.

J. I think I have already done my part as a writer.

K. I should have thought so too if you had not written so well. . . . I suppose you must have read a great deal, Doctor?

J. I *think* more than I *read*. I read a great deal in the early part of my life; but having fallen into ill-health, I have not been able to read much compared with others. For example, I have not read much compared with Dr. Warburton.

K. Dr. Warburton is a man of such general knowledge that you could scarce talk with him

on any subject on which he is not qualified to speak. His learning resembles Garrick's acting in its universality. What do you think, Dr. Johnson, of the controversy between Warburton and Lowth?

J. Warburton has the most general, most scholastic learning; Lowth is the more correct scholar. I do not know which of them calls names the best.

K. I am of the same opinion. You do not think, then, Dr. Johnson, that there was much argument in the case?

J. I do not think there was.

K. Why, truly, when it comes to calling names, argument is pretty well at an end. What do you think, Doctor, of Lord Lyttleton's History just published?

J. I think his style pretty good, but that he has blamed Henry II. rather too much.

K. Why, they seldom do these things by halves.

J. No, sir, not to kings. But for those who speak worse of kings than they deserve I can

find no excuse; I can more easily conceive how some might speak better of them than they deserve without any ill intention.

K. What do you think of Dr. Hill?

J. He is an ingenious man, but has no veracity. Notwithstanding, Dr. Hill is a very curious observer; and if he would have been contented to tell the world no more than he knew, he might have been a very considerable man, and needed not to have recourse to such mean expedients to raise his reputation.

They conversed of several other matters, and during the whole interview "Johnson talked to his Majesty with profound respect, but still in his firm, manly manner, with a sonorous voice, and never in that subdued tone which is commonly used at the levee and in the drawing-room. After the King withdrew, "Johnson showed himself highly pleased with his Majesty's conversation and gracious behavior." To one he remarked: "Sir, they may talk of the King as they will, but he is the finest gentleman I have ever seen." To another:

"Sir, his manners are those of as fine a gentleman as we may suppose Louis XIV. or Charles II."

Goldsmith, after listening to Johnson's report of this famous conversation, sprung from his seat, and advancing to him exclaimed, "Well, you acquitted yourself in this conversation better than I should have done; for I should have bowed and stammered through the whole of it." So it was that Dr. Johnson was in the presence of four of the English monarchs, Queen Anne, George II., George III., and George IV., the last of whom he saw in childhood, and conversed with him.

CHAPTER XXI.

It is Sunday, October 18, 1767, and Catharine Chambers is in her last sickness, and will be buried in three brief weeks. She has been a faithful servant in the Johnson family for forty-three years, and buried the father, brother, and mother of Samuel, and he calls her his "dear old friend;" and this morning they are to part for ever. He proposes to her that, under these solemn circumstances, he would, "if she is willing, say a short prayer beside her." She greatly desires it, and he kneels beside her and prays thus:

"Almighty and most merciful Father, whose loving kindness is over all thy works, behold, visit, and relieve this thy servant, who is grieved with sickness. Grant that the sense of her weakness may add strength to her faith, and seriousness to her repentance. And grant that by the help of thy Holy Spirit, after the

pains and labors of this short life, we may all obtain everlasting happiness, through Jesus Christ our Lord, for whose sake hear our prayers. Amen."

And Amen! to what there is of it. But, alas! is this the sort of prayer at the dying bed of this or any other person? Will stiffness and prettiness and stark formality edify the dying? It seems ungracious to criticise a prayer, but it must be attempted for once.

"Almighty and most merciful Father." *Our Father* would have been better up in that chamber, and with those two. "Whose loving-kindness is over all thy works." Yes; but too ceremonious for the occasion, and better omitted. "Behold, visit, and relieve." Too many words; the poor sick woman is too weak to take them all in. The one dear word *Help!* would have comprised them all. "This thy servant." Too many words again, and too much of helping God to know who is meant, and too dreadfully cold withal. Here, again, one

word, *Catharine*, would be better. *Father, help Catharine*, "who is grieved with sickness." Ay, and the Lord knows it, and not a breath is needed to tell him. "Grant that the sense of her weakness may add strength to her faith," too pretty, too antithetical, too rhetorical, too Johnsonian; "and seriousness to her repentance," still too formal and too unintelligible. The poor dying woman failed to take in the idea, and she is too near eternity to care for musical and well-rounded sentences. *Increase her faith and deepen her repentance* would do full as well. And this is all that the man upon his bended knees can afford for her exclusively. All the rest of the prayer is but a generality of the Prayer book—good, to be sure, but no more suitable for the dying Catharine than for ten thousand times ten thousand of the living, energizing, rejoicing ones. And so he prints the farewell kiss, passes on, and retires and leaves her for ever. The Syrophenician woman prayed more from the heart's depths, and, therefore, prayed

appropriately and successfully, Lord, have mercy and heal my daughter.

In this connection let us take a glimpse of Johnson and his devotional life as it was several years later.

Easter-day, 1776, he offers the following prayer: "Almighty and merciful Father, who seest all our miseries and knowest all our necessities, look down upon me and pity me! Defend me from the violent incursion of evil thoughts, and enable me to form and keep such resolutions as may conduce to the discharge of the duties which thy providence shall appoint me; and so help me by thy Holy Spirit, that my heart may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found, and that I may serve thee with pure affection and a cheerful mind! Have mercy upon me, O God, have mercy upon me! Years and infirmities oppress me; terror and anxiety beset me! Have mercy upon me, my Creator and my Judge. In all dangers protect me; in all perplexities relieve and free me; and so help me by thy Holy Spirit that I may now so

commemorate the death of thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ as that, when this short and painful life shall have an end, I may, for his sake, be received to everlasting happiness. Amen!"

Easter-day three years after, and when seventy years of age, he writes thus: "I rose about half an hour after nine, transcribed the prayer written last night, and, by neglecting to count time, sat too long at breakfast, so that I came to church at the First Lesson. I attended the Litany pretty well; but in the pew could not hear the Communion Service, and missed the Prayer for the Church Militant. Before I went to the altar I prayed the Occasional Prayer. At the altar I commended my departed friends, and again prayed the prayer; I then prayed the Collects, and again my own prayer, by memory. I left out a clause. I then received, I hope with earnestness; and while others received, sat down; but thinking that posture, though usual, improper, I rose and stood. I prayed again in the pew, but with what prayer I have forgotten.

"When I used the Occasional Prayer at the altar I added a general purpose—to avoid idleness. I gave two shillings to the plate.

"Before I went I used, I think, my prayer, and endeavored to calm my mind. After my return I used it again, and the collect for the day. Lord, have mercy upon me!"

CHAPTER XXII.

Dr. Johnson is now (1769) sixty years of age; and it is interesting to note his views, at this time, on the general subject of religion.

Mr. Boswell asks him if there is not less religion in the nation now than formerly.

Johnson. I don't know, sir, that there is.

Boswell. For instance, there used to be a chaplain in every great family, which we do not find now.

J. Neither do you find any of the state servants which great families used formerly to have. There is a change of modes in the whole department of life.

Afterward they converse of Romanism.

B. So, sir, you are no great enemy to the Roman Catholic religion?

J. No more, sir, than to the Presbyterian religion.

B. You are joking.

J. No, sir; I really think so. Nay, sir, of the two, I prefer the Popish.

B. How so, sir?

J. Why, sir, the Presbyterians have no Church, no apostolical ordination.

B. And do you think that absolutely essential, sir?

J. Why, sir, as it was an apostolical institution, I think it is dangerous to be without it. And, sir, the Presbyterians have no public worship; they have no form of prayer in which they know they are to join. They go to hear a man pray, and are to judge whether they will join with him.

B. But, sir, their doctrine is the same with that of the Church of England. Their Confession of Faith and the Thirty-nine Articles contain the same points, even the doctrine of predestination.

J. Why, yes, sir; predestination was a part of the clamor of the times, so it is mentioned in our Articles, but with as little positiveness as could be.

B. Is it necessary, sir, to believe all the Thirty-nine Articles?

J. Why, sir, that is a question which has been much agitated. Some have thought it necessary that they should all be believed; others have considered them to be only articles of peace; that is to say, you are not to preach against them.

B. It appears to me, sir, that predestination, or what is equivalent to it, cannot be avoided if we hold a universal prescience in the Deity.

J. Why, sir, does not God, every day, see things going on without preventing them?

B. True, sir, but if a thing be *certainly* foreseen it must be fixed, and cannot happen otherwise; and if we apply this consideration to the human mind there is no free-will, nor can I see how prayer can be of any avail.

They converse further.

B. What do you think, sir, of purgatory, as believed by the Roman Catholics?

J. Why, sir, it is a very harmless doctrine.

They are of opinion that the generality of mankind are neither so obstinately wicked as to deserve everlasting punishment, nor so good as to merit being admitted into the society of blessed spirits; and, therefore, that God is graciously pleased to allow of a middle state, where they may be purified by certain degrees of suffering. You see, sir, there is nothing unreasonable in this.

B. But then, sir, their masses for the dead?

J. Why, sir, if it be once established that there are souls in purgatory, it is as proper to pray for *them* as for our brethren of mankind who are yet in this life.

B. The idolatry of the mass?

J. Sir, there is no idolatry in the mass. They believe God to be there, and they adore him.

B. The worship of saints?

J. Sir, they do not worship saints, they invoke them; they only ask their prayers. I am talking all this time of the *doctrines* of the

Church of Rome. I grant you that in *practice* purgatory is made a lucrative imposition, and that the people do become idolatrous as they recommend themselves to the tutelary protection of particular saints. I think their giving the sacrament only in one kind is criminal, because it is contrary to the express institution of Christ, and I wonder how the Council of Trent admitted it.

B. Confession?

J. Why, I don't know but that is a good thing. The Scripture says, 'Confess your faults one to another;' and the priests confess as well as the laity. Then it must be considered that their absolution is only upon repentance, and often upon penance also. You think your sins may be forgiven without penance upon repentance alone.

Boswell asserts that this is an accurate record. "But it is not improbable," he subjoins, "that if one had taken the other side he might have reasoned differently."

It seems to be true, however, that Johnson

had no inconsiderable respect for the Roman Church. He was heard to say that "a man who is converted from Protestantism to Popery may be sincere; he parts with nothing; he is only superadding to what he already had. But a convert from Popery to Protestantism gives up so much of what he has held as sacred as any thing that he retains—there is so much *laceration of mind* in such a conversion—that it can hardly be sincere and lasting." "Johnson here," says one, "forgets Latimer, Ridley, Hooper, and all those of all nations who have renounced Popery."

Boswell afterward introduced the subject of death.

Boswell. David Hume said to me, he was no more uneasy to think he should *not be* after this life, than that he *had not been* before he began to exist.

Johnson. Sir, if he really thinks so his perceptions are disturbed, he is mad; if he does not think so, he lies. He may tell you he holds his finger in the flame of a candle without feel-

ing pain, would you believe him? When he dies, he at least gives up all he has.

B. Foote, sir, told me that when he was very ill he was not afraid to die.

J. It is not true, sir. Hold a pistol to Foote's breast, or to Hume's breast, and threaten to kill them, and you'll see how they behave.

B. But may we not fortify our minds for the approach of death?

J. No, sir, let it alone. It matters not how a man dies, but how he lives. The act of dying is not of importance, it lasts so short a time. He added, with an earnest look: "A man knows it must be so, and submits. It will do him no good to whine."

This conversation on death threw Johnson into a state of great agitation, for it was always a subject on which he conversed with much reluctance. In a subsequent interview they talked of the future state. Boswell carefully leads his friend to the subject, and the following dialogue occurs:

J. Why, sir, the happiness of an unembodied spirit will consist in a consciousness of the favor of God, in the contemplation of truth, and in the possession of felicitating ideas.

B. But, sir, is there any harm in our forming to ourselves conjectures as to the particulars of our happiness, though the Scripture has said but very little on the subject? We know not what we shall be.

J. Sir, there is no harm. What philosophy suggests to us on this topic is probable; what Scripture tells us, is certain. Dr. Henry More has carried it as far as philosophy can. You may buy both his theological and philosophical works in two volumes folio for about eight shillings.

B. One of the most pleasing thoughts is, that we shall see our friends again.

J. Yes, sir; but you must consider that when we are become purely rational many of our friendships will be cut off. Many friendships are formed by a community of sensual

pleasures; all these will be cut off. We form many friendships with bad men because they have agreeable qualities, and they can be useful to us; but after death they can no longer be of use to us. We form many friendships by mistake, imagining people to be different from what they really are. After death we shall see every one in a true light. Then, sir, they talk of our meeting our relations; but then all relationship is dissolved, and we shall have no regard for one person more than another but for their real value. However, we shall either have the satisfaction of meeting our friends, or be satisfied without meeting them.

B. Yet, sir, we see in Scripture that Dives still retained an anxious concern about his brethren.

J. Why, sir, we must either suppose that passage to be metaphorical, or hold, with many divines and all the Purgatorians, that departed souls do not all at once arrive at the utmost perfection of which they are capable.

B. I think, sir, that is a very rational supposition.

J. Why yes, sir; but we do not know it is a true one. There is no harm in believing it; but you must not compel others to make it an article of faith, for it is not revealed.

B. Do you think, sir, it is wrong in a man who holds the doctrine of Purgatory to pray for the souls of his deceased friends?

J. Why no, sir.

B. I have been told that in the Liturgy of the Episcopal Church of Scotland there was a form of prayer for the dead.

J. Sir, it is not in the Liturgy which Laud framed for the Episcopal Church of Scotland. If there is a Liturgy older than that I should be glad to see it.

B. As to our employment in a future state the sacred writings say little. The Revelation, however, of St. John gives us many ideas, and particularly mentions music.

J. Why, sir, ideas must be given you by means of something which you know; and as

to music, there are some philosophers and divines who have maintained that we shall not be spiritualized to such a degree but that something of matter, very much refined, will remain. In that case music may make a part of our future felicity.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Of Dr. Johnson, at this period of his life, the following summary sketch, as given by Boswell, will not be without interest to the reader.

"Let my readers, then, remember that he was a sincere and zealous Christian, of high Church of England and monarchical principles, which he would not tamely suffer to be questioned; steady and inflexible in maintaining the obligations of piety and virtue, both from a regard to the order of society, and from a veneration for the Great Source of all order; correct, nay, stern, in his taste; hard to please, and easily offended; impetuous and irritable in his temper, but of a most humane and benevolent heart; having a mind stored with a vast and various collection of learning and knowledge, which he communicated with peculiar perspicuity and force, in rich and choice expression. He united a most logical head with a most fer-

tile imagination, which gave him an extraordinary advantage in arguing; for he could reason close or wide, as he saw best for the moment. He could, when he chose it, be the greatest sophist that ever wielded a weapon in the schools of declamation, but he indulged this only in conversation; for he owned he sometimes talked for victory; he was too conscientious to make error permanent and pernicious by deliberately writing it. He was conscious of his superiority. He loved praise when it was brought to him, but he was too proud to seek for it. He was somewhat susceptible of flattery. His mind was so full of imagery that he might have been perpetually a poet. It has been often remarked that in his poetical pieces, which it is to be regretted are so few, because so excellent, his style is easier than in his prose. There is deception in this; it is not easier, but better suited to the dignity of verse; as one may dance with grace whose motions, in ordinary walking in the common step, are awkward. He had a constitutional melancholy, the clouds

of which darkened the brightness of his fancy, and gave a gloomy cast to his whole course of thinking. Yet, though grave and awful in his deportment, when he thought it necessary or proper he frequently indulged himself in pleasantry and sportive sallies. He was prone to superstition, but not to credulity. Though his imagination might incline him to a belief of the marvelous and the mysterious, his vigorous reason examined the evidence with jealousy. He had a loud voice, and a slow, deliberate utterance, which, no doubt, gave some additional weight to the sterling metal of his conversation. Lord Pembroke said once to me at Wilton, with a happy pleasantry and some truth, that Dr. Johnson's sayings would not appear so extraordinary were it not for his *bow-wow way*. But I admit the truth of this only on some occasions. The "Messiah," played upon the Canterbury organ, is more sublime than when played upon an inferior instrument; but very slight music will seem grand when conveyed to the ear through that majestic medium. While,

therefore, Dr. Johnson's sayings are read, let his manner be taken along with them. Let it, however, be observed that the sayings themselves are generally great; that, though he might be an ordinary composer at times, he was, for the most part, a Handel. His person was large, robust, I may say approaching to the gigantic, and grown unwieldy from corpulency. His countenance was naturally of the cast of an ancient statue, but somewhat disfigured by the scars of that "evil" which, it was formerly imagined, the royal touch could cure. He was now in his sixty-fourth year, and was become a little dull of hearing. His sight had always been somewhat weak; yet, so much does mind govern, and even supply, the deficiency of organs, that his perceptions were uncommonly quick and accurate. His head, and sometimes also his body, shook with a kind of motion like the effect of a palsy; he appeared to be frequently disturbed by cramps, or convulsive contractions, of the nature of that distemper called St. Vitus's dance. He wore a

full suit of plain brown clothes, with twisted hair-buttons of the same color, a large bushy grayish wig, a plain shirt, black worsted stockings, and silver buckles. Upon this tour,* when journeying, he wore boots, and a very wide brown cloth greatcoat, with pockets which might have almost held the two volumes of his folio dictionary, and he carried in his hand a large English oak stick."

* Tour to the Western Islands.

CHAPTER XXIV.

In the autumn of this year Johnson accompanied Boswell on a tour among the Hebrides. This excursion appears to have been contemplated for a considerable time by Boswell, who was much interested in enticing Johnson into Scotland with a view of presenting him to various interesting scenes and persons of that country.

He reaches Edinburgh about the middle of August, and is, of course, the guest of Mr. Boswell, who hastens to salute him on his arrival at the hotel. "I went to him directly. He embraced me cordially, and I exulted in the thought that I now had him actually in Caledonia." Boswell adds, "My wife had tea ready for him, which it is well known he delighted to drink at all hours. He showed much complacency upon finding that the mistress of the house was so attentive to his singular habit;

and as no man could be more polite when he chose to be so, his address to her was most courteous and engaging, and his conversation soon charmed her into a forgetfulness of his external appearance." "Mr. Johnson," this enthusiast continues, "was pleased with my daughter Veronica, then a child of about four months old. She had the appearance of listening to him. His motions seemed to her to be intended for her amusement; and when he stopped she fluttered, and made a little infantine noise, and a kind of signal for him to begin again. She would be held close to him, which was a proof, from simple nature, that his figure was not horrid. Her fondness for him endeared her still more to me, and I declared she should have five hundred pounds of additional fortune."

At Edinburgh, Dr. Johnson, through the sprightly services of Boswell, was introduced to a number of distinguished men, as Robertson the historian, Sir William Forbes, and others.

With his Edinburgh friends he seems to have enjoyed several pleasant interviews; but a slight report of one of their conversations only must suffice. Johnson was remarking of Burke that he had a great variety of knowledge, store of imagery, and copiousness of language. Robertson adds, that he had wit, too.

"No, sir," replies Johnson; "he never succeeds there. 'Tis low; 'tis conceit. I used to say, Burke never once made a good joke. What I most envy Burke for is, his being constantly the same. He is never what we call *humdrum;* never unwilling to begin to talk, nor in haste to leave off.

Boswell. Yet he can listen.

Johnson. No; I cannot say he is good at that. So desirous is he to talk, that if one is speaking at this end of the table he'll speak to somebody at the other end. Burke, sir, is such a man that if you met him for the first time in the street where you were stopped by a drove of oxen, and you and he stepped aside to take

shelter but for five minutes, he'd talk to you in such a manner that when you parted you would say, This is an extraordinary man. Now you may be long enough with me without finding any thing extraordinary.

After some further remarks, Johnson added that he could not understand how a man could apply to one thing and not another.

Robertson. One man has more judgment, another more imagination.

J. No, sir; it is only one man has more mind than another. He may direct it differently; he may, by accident, see the success of one kind of study, and take a desire to excel in it. I am persuaded that had Sir Isaac Newton applied to poetry he would have made a very fine epic poem. I could as easily apply to law as to tragic poetry.

B. Yet, sir, you did apply to tragic poetry, not to law.

J. Because, sir, I had not money to study law. Sir, the man who has vigor may walk to the east just as well as to the

west, if he happens to turn his head that way.

B. But, sir, 'tis like walking up and down a hill; one man may naturally do the one better than the other. A hare will run up a hill best from her forelegs being short; a dog down.

J. Nay, sir; that is from mechanical powers. If you make mind mechanical you may argue in that manner. One mind is a vice, and holds fast; there's a good memory. Another is a file, and he is a disputant, a controversalist. Another is a razor, and he is sarcastical.

Afterward there was a word or two of Whitefield and Wesley.

J. I knew him (Whitefield) before he began to be better than other people, (smiling;) I believe he sincerely meant well, but had a mixture of politics and ostentation; whereas Wesley thought of religion only.*

* Alluding to this expression of Johnson, Boswell pays the following handsome tribute to Wesley: "I should think myself very unworthy if I did not acknowledge Mr. John Wesley's merit as a veteran soldier of Jesus Christ; who has, I do believe, turned many from darkness to light, and from the power of

B. Whitefield had strong natural eloquence, which, if cultivated, would have done great things.

J. Why, sir, I take it he was at the height of what his abilities could do, and was sensible of it. He had the ordinary advantages of education; but he chose to pursue that oratory which is for the mob.

B. He had great effect on the passions.

J. Why, sir, I don't think so. He could not represent a succession of pathetic images. He vociferated, and made an impression. There, again, was mind like a hammer.

After several similar interviews and conversations with the literati of Edinburgh, attended with more or less breakfasting and sight-seeing, Boswell starts with his illustrious guest toward the "Islands of the West."

Satan to God." At another time he requests of Johnson a letter of introduction to Wesley, and adds, "I wish to be made acquainted with Mr. John Wesley; for though I differed from him in some points, I admired his various talents, and loved his pious zeal."

CHAPTER XXV.

Mr. Boswell cannot commence his narrative of this excursion to the Hebrides without treating his readers with the following precious specimen of his egotism:

"I have given a sketch of Dr. Johnson; my readers may wish to know a little of his fellow-traveler. Think, then, of a gentleman of ancient blood, the pride of which was his predominant passion. He was then in his thirty-third year, and had been about four years happily married. His inclination was to be a soldier; but his father, a respectable Judge, had pressed him into the profession of the law. He had traveled a good deal, and seen many varieties of human life. He had thought more than any body had supposed, and had a pretty good stock of general learning and knowledge. He had all Dr. Johnson's principles, with some degree of relaxation. He had rather too little than too much pru-

dence; and, his imagination being lively, he often said things of which the effect was very different from the intention. He resembled sometimes

'The best good man, with the worst natured muse.'

"He cannot deny himself the vanity of finishing with the encomium of Dr. Johnson, whose friendly partiality to the companion of his tour represents him as 'one whose acuteness would help my inquiry, and whose gayety of conversation, and civility of manners, are sufficient to counteract the inconveniences of travel in countries less hospitable than we have passed.'"

Boswell adds of his wife: "She did not seem quite easy when we left her, but away we went." We track them as they cross the Frith of Forth, and as they reach St. Andrews late at night. Here they tarry a day or two for sight-seeing and social interviews with learned men, affording Johnson opportunities of venting his spleen upon Knox—wishing him to have been buried in the highway, and dreading what

he called his reformations, and hoping that a certain old dilapidated steeple which they passed might fall on some of his posterity. Resuming their journey they pass Dundee, and reach Montrose near midnight. The following day they arrived at Aberdeen, having enjoyed on the way a highly pleasant interview with Lord Monboddo at his residence, where the travelers were received with great hospitality. At Aberdeen they were introduced to the President and Professors of the University, between whom and the travelers was much pleasant intercourse. Proceeding, they reach Inverness by way of Banff, Cullen, and Elgin. At this point they dispensed with their carriage, and pursued their journey on horseback over the Highlands to Glenelg, opposite the Isle of Skye. On the following day they crossed the water six miles to this island; and thus, after a leisurely journey of about a fortnight from Edinburgh, our two excursionists were at the Hebrides.

We can follow these strange yoke-fellows

but briefly amid their sojournings, wanderings, and conversations among these islands. Johnson's fame had, of course, preceded him whereever he traveled through Scotland and the Hebrides, so that he was every-where received and treated with distinction by the more intelligent and wealthy classes of society. Moreover, Boswell, "his guide, philosopher, and friend," was of the Scotch nobility, so that the literary renown of the one, and the social position of the other, insured to them a cordial introduction every-where.

On the island of Skye, prominent among the Hebrides, they seem to have spent quite a number of days, receiving the hospitalities of one and another distinguished family. As they travel in the island, they notice houses generally made of turf and roofed with grass. A country well peopled, abundance of rocks, wearing, at times the appearance of extensive ruins of ancient buildings, the landscape mainly destitute of trees, but green with verdure.

The excursionists are presently invited to

Rasay, lying a short distance west of Skye, and the invitation comes from the proprietor of the island. They embark in a strong open boat sent over for their special accommodation. The wind was high or contrary, and the sea rough, yet the four stout oarsmen drove the boat vigorously on, singing as they rowed, Dr. Johnson, meanwhile, sitting high in the stern "like a magnificent Triton." They reach the island at six o'clock, and as they near the landing through a beautiful bay the song of the boatmen is succeeded by the singing and shouting of the reapers on shore as they ply vigorously the joyous work of the harvest. A large company, headed by the Laird of Rasay himself, issue out from the fine family mansion to salute the strangers. Then follows a substantial dinner, with various wines, and coffee and tea. Afterward come music and dancing and abundant joviality, and Boswell is, of course, in his element, and the great Johnson is so delighted with the scene as to say, "I know not how we shall get away."

In their explorations and inquiries they ascertain the island to be about fifteen miles long by four in width, comprising well-drained grass and corn lands, no scarcity of stones, a considerable mountain, a cave or two, some natural forests, and numerous small lakes abounding with fish. There is also an abundance of cattle, sheep, goats, horses, and some species of wild fowls, but no hares, rabbits, foxes, or deer. The island has no roads, and consequently there is no riding, for which, indeed, there would seem to be limited opportunities, as they estimate it to rain there nine months in the year.

After a sojourn there of three days our travelers returned to Skye, and passed some days at the castle, Dunvegen, where they were splendidly entertained by the laird, Col. M'Leod, and had much interesting conversation; so that of this visit Boswell writes: "It was wonderful how well time passed in a remote castle, and in dreary weather."

After some days they embarked for Mull,

touching at the small island of Col on the way. Of this island, being near the fifty-seventh parallel, the climate is described as being very mild, so that they never house their animals in winter. The lakes are never frozen sufficiently to bear a man, and snow never lies above a few hours.

At length, reaching Mull after several days' detention at Col, they describe the island as a hilly country, diversified with heath and grass and many rivulets. Johnson, in a fit of ill-humor, denounced it as "a dreary country, much worse than Skye. O, sir, a most dolorous country."

Traveling on horseback, Boswell was obliged to ride without a bridle, and his servant without a saddle, while Johnson was longing "to get to *a country of saddles and bridles.*" The horse on which he rode being small was not quite adequate to support so heavy a man, so that in ascending the frequent rugged steeps he was obliged to dismount and walk. Before finally leaving Mull they cross to the small

neighboring island, Icolmkill, or Iona, a spot fraught with historical interest. So excited were the travelers on reaching this little island that they embraced each other, and one result of the visit was the following splendid passage from Johnson's pen: "We were now treading that illustrious island which was once the luminary of the Caledonian regions, whence savage clans and roving bårbarians derived the benefits of knowledge and the blessings of religion. To abstract the mind from all local emotion would be impossible if it were endeavored, and would be foolish if it were possible. Whatever withdraws us from the power of our senses—whatever makes the past, the distant, or the future predominate over the present—advances us in the dignity of thinking beings. Far from me, and from my friends, be such frigid philosophy as may conduct us indifferent and unmoved over any ground which has been dignified by wisdom, bravery, or virtue. That man is little to be envied whose patriotism would not gain force upon the plain of *Mara-*

thon, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of *Iona!*"

Returning to Mull on the following day, they immediately crossed to the main land at Oban, and thus was finished their excursion among the Western Islands.*

* Whoever would peruse a particular and deeply interesting account of this excursion should consult not only the Journal of Mr. Boswell, but especially Johnson's history of the journey as given in his Works.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Our travelers, with but slight delay, proceeded to Edinburgh by way of Glasgow. Having received the congratulations and attentions of many persons of distinction at these two famous cities, Dr. Johnson, after a few days of rest and recreation, took coach for London, where he arrived in safety late in November.

The following is Mr. Boswell's brief summary of Dr. Johnson's movements in Scotland:

"His stay in Scotland was from the 18th of August, on which day he arrived, till the 22d of November, when he set out on his return to London; and, I believe, ninety-four days were never passed by any man in a more vigorous exertion.

"He came by the way of Berwick-upon-Tweed to Edinburgh, where he remained a few days, and then went, by St. Andrews, Aberdeen, Inverness, and Fort Augustus, to the Hebrides,

to visit which was the principal object he had in view. He visited the Isles of Skye, Rasay, Col, Mull, Inchkenneth, and Icolmkill. He traveled through Argyleshire by Inverary, and from thence, by Loch Lomond and Dunbarton, to Glasgow; then, by London, to Auchinleck in Ayrshire, the seat of my family, and then, by Hamilton, back to Edinburgh, where he again spent some time.

"He saw the four Universities of Scotland, its three principal cities, and as much of the Highland and insular life as was sufficient for his philosophical contemplation.

"He was respectfully entertained by the great, the learned, and the elegant wherever he went; nor was he less delighted with the hospitality which he experienced in humbler life."

Dr. Johnson, on reaching London, seems to have commenced at once to prepare an account of his tour to the Hebrides, which was published in the following autumn.

A few brief extracts from his letters to Mrs.

Thrale, during his peregrinations in Scotland, will occupy all the space we can spare for any further details of this excursion:

At Edinburgh.—"I am now at Edinburgh, and have been, this day, running about; I run pretty well.

"Boswell has very handsome and spacious rooms; level with the ground on one side of the house, and, on the other, four stories high."

At St. Andrews.—"The Professors (of the University) who happened to be resident in the vacation made a public dinner, and treated us very kindly and respectfully.

"Education, such as is here to be had, is sufficiently cheap. Their term, or, as they call it, their session, lasts seven months in the year, which the students of the highest rank and greatest expense may pass here for twenty pounds; in which are included board, lodging, books, and the continual instruction of three Professors."

At Aberdeen.—"There are two cities of the name of Aberdeen. The two cities have their

separate magistrates, and the two colleges are, in effect, two universities, which confer degrees on each other.

"Education is here of the same price as at St. Andrew's, only the session is but from the 1st of November to the 1st of April. The academical buildings seem rather to advance than decline. They showed their libraries, which were not very splendid; but some manuscripts were so exquisitely penned that I wished my dear mistress * to have seen them.

"I was presented with the freedom of the city, not in a gold box, but in good Latin. Let me pay Scotland one just praise! There was no officer gaping for a fee. This could have been said of no city on the English side of the Tweed. I wore my patent of freedom, *pro more*, in my hat from the new town to the old, about a mile. I then dined with my friend the Professor of Physic, at his house, and saw the King's College. Boswell was very angry that the Aberdeen Professors would not talk."

* Mrs. Thrale.

At Foris.—"A very great proportion of the people are barefoot; shoes are not considered as necessaries of life. It is still the custom to send out the sons of gentlemen without them into the streets and ways."

At Glenelg.—"We, at last, came to Glenelg, a place on the sea-side opposite to Skye. We were, by this time, weary and disgusted; nor was our humor much mended by our inn; which, though it was built of lime and slate—the Highlander's description of a house which he thinks magnificent—had neither wine, bread, eggs, nor any thing that we could eat or drink. When we were taken up stairs, a dirty fellow bounced out of the bed where one of us was to lie. Boswell blustered, but nothing could be got. At last a gentleman in the neighborhood, who heard of our arrival, sent us rum and white sugar. Boswell was now provided for in part; and the landlord prepared some mutton chops, which we could not eat, and killed two hens, of which Boswell made his servant broil a limb, with what effect I know not. We had a lemon and a

piece of bread, which supplied me with my supper. When the repast was ended we began to deliberate upon bed. Mrs. Boswell had warned us that we should *catch something*, and had given us *sheets* for our *security;* 'for——and——,' she said, 'came back from Skye scratching themselves.' I thought sheets a slender defense against the confederacy with which we were threatened, and by this time our Highlanders had found a place where they could get some hay. I ordered hay to be laid thick upon the bed, and slept upon it in my great coat. Boswell laid sheets upon his bed, and reposed in linen like a gentleman."

At the Isle of Skye.—"I am now looking on the sea from a house of Sir Alexander Macdonald, in the Isle of Skye. Little did I once think of seeing this region of obscurity, and little did you once expect a salutation from this verge of European life. I have now the pleasure of going where nobody goes, and seeing what nobody sees. Our design is to visit several of the smaller

islands, and then pass over to the southwest of Scotland."

"Skye is almost equally divided between the two great families of Macdonald and Macleod, other proprietors having only small districts. The two great lords do not know, within twenty square miles, the contents of their own territories."

"Macleod has offered me an island. If it were not too far off I should hardly refuse it. My island would be pleasanter than Brighthelmstone, if you and my master could come to it; but I cannot think it pleasant to live quite alone."

"You will now expect that I should give you some account of the Isle of Skye, of which, though I have been twelve days upon it, I have little to say. It is an island, perhaps fifty miles long, so much indented by inlets of the sea that there is no part of it removed from the water more than six miles. No part that I have seen is plain; you are always climbing or descending, and every step is upon rock

or mire. A walk upon plowed ground in England is a dance upon carpets compared to the toilsome drudgery of wandering in Skye. There is neither town nor village in the island, nor have I seen any house but Macleod's that is not much below your habitation at Brighthelmstone. In the mountains there are stags and roebucks, but no hares, and few rabbits; nor have I seen any thing that interested me as a zoologist, except an otter, bigger than I thought an otter could have been."

At Rasay.—"There is no riding at Rasay, the whole island being rock or mountain, from which the cattle often fall and are destroyed. It is very barren, and maintains, as near as I could collect, about seven hundred inhabitants, perhaps ten to a square mile. In these countries you are not to suppose that you shall find villages or inclosures. The traveler wanders through a naked desert, gratified sometimes, but rarely, with the sight of cows, and now and then finds a heap of loose stones and turf in a cavity between rocks, where a being

born with all those powers which education expands, and all those sensations which culture refines, is condemned to shelter itself from the wind and rain."

At Col.—"Col is but a barren place. Description has here few opportunities of spreading her colors. The difference of day and night is the only vicissitude. The succession of sunshine to rain, or of calms to tempests, we have not known; wind and rain have been our only weather."

At Glasgow.—"October 29 was spent in surveying the city and college. I was not much pleased with any of the Professors. The town is opulent and handsome."

At Edinburgh.—"We came hither on the ninth of this month. I long to come under your care, but for some days cannot decently get away. They congratulate our return as if we had been with Phipps or Banks. I am ashamed of their salutations."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THUS Dr. Johnson, who, up to old age, seems to have been very stationary, and possessing but a slight disposition to wander abroad, becomes something of a traveler. In the summer following the autumn of his visit to the Hebrides he accompanies the Thrales on a journey to Wales. This excursion occupied the travelers nearly three months, and though he kept a brief journal of their several stages of progress, he yet notes but little that is of interest to us who follow him at the distance of a hundred years. "I have been," he writes to Boswell, "in five of the six counties of North Wales, and have seen St. Asaph and Bangor, the two seats of their bishops; have been upon Penmaen-mawr and Snowdon, and passed over into Anglesea. But Wales is so little different from England that it offers nothing to the speculation of the traveler."

Returning to London, he completed and put to press his "Journey to the Western Islands." He also published a brief political pamphlet entitled "The Patriot." In this composition, while enumerating various marks of a true patriot, he must needs betray that rank Toryism for which he was always so much distinguished. "He that wishes to see his country robbed of its rights cannot be a patriot. That man, therefore, is no patriot who justifies the ridiculous claims of American usurpation; who endeavors to deprive the nation of its natural and lawful authority over its own colonies, those colonies which were settled under English protection, were constituted by an English charter, and have been defended by English arms.... He that accepts protection stipulates obedience. We have always protected the Americans; we may, therefore, subject them to government."

Such is the sophistry into which even a great mind may fall, and thus easily may prejudice darken a judgment otherwise clear and luminous as the fair sunshine.

Shortly afterward there appeared another political effusion from his pen, inspired by the same *Americans*, and the same great political crisis. This pamphlet was entitled "Taxation no Tyranny;" and was designed to be an answer to the "Resolutions and Addresses of the American Congress."

This title sufficiently indicates the occasion of this unfortunate production. Johnson's Tory sentiments toward America had ever been of an extreme character, and such as were as disgraceful to himself, as they were unjust and injurious to the colonists. Years before penning this pamphlet he denounced them as criminals. "Sir, they are a race of convicts, and ought to be thankful for any thing we allow them short of hanging."

Such was the bearing of this great and mistaken man toward our Revolutionary fathers, and which qualified him to be a fit advocate of colonial oppression, and to goad on the British government to those extreme and unjust measures which resulted to England in the loss of

an empire, and to us in the establishment of an independent and mighty nation.

It is pleasant to notice that Mr. Boswell, with all his singular and intense deference for Johnson, here dissents *in toto* from his great master. Referring to the pamphlet "Taxation no Tyranny," he writes: "Of this performance I avoided to talk with him; for I had now formed a clear and settled opinion that the people of America were well warranted to resist a claim that their fellow-subjects in the mother country should have the entire command of their fortunes by taxing them without their own consent; and the extreme violence which it breathed appeared to me so unsuitable to the mildness of a Christian philosopher, and so directly opposite to the principles of peace which he had so beautifully recommended in his pamphlet respecting Falkland's Islands, that I was sorry to see him appear in so unfavorable a light. Besides, I could not perceive in it that ability of argument, or that felicity of expression, for which he was, upon other occasions, so

eminent. Positive assertion, sarcastical severity, and extravagant ridicule, which he himself reprobated as a test of truth, were united in this rhapsody.

"That this pamphlet was written at the desire of those who were then in power I have no doubt; and, indeed, he owned to me that it had been revised and curtailed by some of them. He told me that they had struck out one passage, which was to this effect: 'That the colonist could with no solidity argue from their not having been taxed while in their infancy that they should not now be taxed. We do not put a calf into the plow; we wait till he is an ox.' He said 'They struck it out either critically, as too ludicrous, or politically, as too exasperating. I care not which. It was their business. If an architect says I will build five stories, and the man who employs him says, I will have only three, the employer is to decide.' 'Yes, sir,' said I, 'in ordinary cases. But should it be so when the architect gives his skill and labor gratis?'"

It is pleasant also to notice that Dr. Johnson's political effusions drew upon him numerous attacks from minds who thought more soberly and justly upon the great American question. Dr. Towers thus addresses him: "I would, however, wish you to remember, should you again address the public under the character of a political writer, that luxuriance of imagination or energy of language will ill compensate for the want of candor, of justice, and of truth. And I shall only add, that should I hereafter be disposed to read, as I heretofore have done, the most excellent of all your performances, 'The Rambler,' the pleasure which I have been accustomed to find in it will be much diminished by the reflection that the writer of so moral, so elegant, and so valuable a work was capable of prostituting his talents in such productions as 'The False Alarm,' the 'Thoughts on the Transactions respecting Falkland's Islands,' and 'The Patriot.'" The famous "Taxation no Tyranny" was not yet issued, and was, therefore, not included in this precious

list. Another eminent person thus inquires of Boswell:

"How can your great, I will not say your *pious*, but your *moral* friend, support the barbarous measures of administration, which they have not the face to ask even their infidel pensioner, Hume, to defend?"

While numerous animadversions so faithful and just were hurled at Johnson for his Tory publications, it is strange as well as painful to detect the great and good Wesley among his sympathizers. As the points at which these two great lives touch are extremely few, we venture to insert entire the following letter of Johnson to Wesley:

"*February* 6, 1776.

"SIR: When I received your 'Commentary on the Bible,' I durst not, at first, flatter myself that I was to keep it, having so little claim to so valuable a present; and when Mrs. Hall* informed me of your kindness, was hindered,

* A sister of Wesley.

from time to time, from returning you those thanks which I now entreat you to accept.

"I have thanks, likewise, to return you for the addition of your important suffrage to my argument on the American question. To have gained such a mind as yours may justly confirm me in my own opinion. What effect my paper has upon the public I know not; but I have no reason to be discouraged. The lecturer was surely in the right, who, though he saw his audience slinking away, refused to quit the chair while Plato stayed.

"I am, reverend sir,

"Your most humble ser-vant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

The compliment to Wesley in the conclusion of the above letter is as flattering and elegant as it is pitiful and sad that such a compliment might not have been elicited by a more meritorious and worthy occasion. And then what are such compliments worth, coming even from the golden pen of the great Johnson, when,

only a few months after the date of the above letter, he descends to utter the contemptuous saying following touching this same modern Plato?

"In the fourth class (of egotists) we have the journalist, temporal and spiritual; Elias Ashmole, William Lilly, George Whitefield, John Wesley, and a thousand other old women and fanatic writers of memoirs and meditations."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Dr. Johnson is again on his travels. Two years before this he was stumbling hither and thither among the Hebrides. One year ago he was rambling up and down Wales; and now, September 15th, he is off for the continent and the mighty city of Paris. In this tour, also, he accompanies the Thrales. They are over the channel in six hours, pass on to Paris by one way, intending to return by another, with a view of seeing all possible. At Paris, Fontainebleau, Versailles, etc., there is, of course much to be seen, and they call upon the King and Queen, and Mr. Thrale keeps two coaches and a very fine table: "But, upon the whole, I cannot make much acquaintance here; and though the churches, palaces, and some private houses, are very magnificent, there is no very great pleasure after having seen many in seeing more; at least the pleasure, what-

ever it be, must some time have an end, and we are beginning to think when we shall come home."

Natural scenery seems never to have had many attractions for Johnson; and when, on this tour, Mr. Thrale was once pointing out to him a beautiful landscape, "Never heed such nonsense," said he; "a blade of grass is always a blade of grass whether in one country or another. Let us, if we do *talk*, talk about something; men and women are my subjects of inquiry; let us see how these differ from those we have left behind."

Johnson disliked the French as truly as the Scotch; "but he applauded the number of their books and the graces of their style." "They have few sentiments," said he, "but they express them neatly; they have little meat, but they dress it well."

He thus talks to Boswell of the French: "The great in France live very magnificently, but the rest very miserably. There is no happy middle state, as in England.

"The shops of Paris are mean; the meat in the market is such as would be sent to a jail in England; and Mr. Thrale justly observed that the cookery of the French was forced upon them by necessity, for they could not eat their meat unless they added some taste to it. The French are an indelicate people; they will spit upon any place. At Madame Du Bocaze's, a literary lady of rank, the footman took the sugar in his fingers and threw it into my coffee. I was going to put it aside; but hearing it was made on purpose for me, I e'en tasted Tom's fingers. The same lady would needs make tea *à l'Anglaise.* The spout of the tea-pot did not pour freely; she bade the footman blow into it. France is worse than Scotland in every thing but climate Nature has done more for the French, but they have done less for themselves than the Scotch have done."

On another occasion, and in another company, he remarked: "The French, sir, are a very silly people. They have no common life; nothing but the two ends, beggary and nobility.

Sir, they are made up, in every thing, of two extremes. They have no common sense, they have no common manners, no common learning; it is gross ignorance, or *les belles lettres*. . . . They are much behindhand, stupid, ignorant creatures. At Fontainebleau I saw a horse-race. Every thing was wrong; the heaviest weight was put upon the weakest horse, and all the jockeys wore the same color coat."

Being asked if he had any acquaintance in Paris, "No," he replied, "I did not stay long enough to make any. I spoke only Latin, and I could not have much conversation. There is no good in letting the French have a superiority over you every word you speak."

Johnson understood the French language perfectly, but could not speak it readily by reason of its peculiar pronunciation. Hence he conversed, while in France, in the Latin language, which he spoke with a fluency and elegance that were wonderful.

Johnson and his friends reached England November 12th, after an absence of two months

CHAPTER XXIX.

Dr. Johnson is now approaching his seventieth year, while, as yet, he evinces no decay of his great powers. Indeed, it was one of his firmly established sentiments that it was unnecessary for the intellect to decline in old age. "It is a man's own fault," said he; "it is from want of use if his mind grows torpid in old age;" and being asked if an old man does not lose faster than he gets, "I think not," he replied, "if he exerts himself."

Is there not much truth here? and do not a multitude of instances in illustration at once occur to us? And does it not furnish to such as are growing old a lesson as pleasant and encouraging as it is solemn and important?

It was not an uncommon circumstance that Dr. Johnson, amid his various interviews and conversations with literary characters, should

here and there chance to enter the lists with female minds, and not always to his advantage. He makes the acquaintance of Miss Knowles, an intelligent Quakeress, and the subject of conversation is Soame Jenyns's "View of the Internal Evidence of the Christian Religion." The lady expresses her dissent from the sentiment of Jenyns, that friendship is not a Christian virtue.

Johnson. Why, madam, strictly speaking, he is right. All friendship is preferring the interest of a friend, to the neglect, or perhaps against the interest, of others; so that an old Greek said, 'He that has *friends* has *no friend*.' Now Christianity recommends universal benevolence; to consider all men as our brethren; which is contrary to the virtue of friendship, as described by the ancient philosophers. Surely, madam, your sect must approve of this, for you call all men friends.

Miss Knowles. We are commanded to do good to all men, but especially to those who are of the household of faith.

J. Well, madam, the household of faith is wide enough.

Miss K. But, Doctor, our Saviour had twelve Apostles, yet there was one he *loved.* John was called the disciple whom Jesus loved.

J. Very well indeed, madam. You have said very well.

Boswell. A fine application. Pray, sir, had you ever thought of it?

J. I had not, sir.

Then suddenly and violently he added: "I am willing to love all mankind, except an *American.*" Then his rage was enkindled, and he breathed out threatenings and slaughter, denouncing them as rascals, robbers, and pirates, and exclaiming that he would "burn and destroy them."

"Sir," said another lady, "this is an instance that we are always most violent against those whom we have injured."

All this, it should be understood, was in 1778, when these same "rascals," with George

Washington at their head, were performing some provoking things in these parts.

Miss Knowles appears again upon the scene, and again, we must think, the advantage is with the fair Quakeress. Mr. Boswell expresses horror at the thought of death.

Miss K. Nay, thou shouldst not have a horror for what is the gate of life.

J. No rational man can die without uneasy apprehension.

Miss K. The righteous shall have *hope* in his death.

J. Yes, madam; that is, he shall not have despair. But, consider, his hope of salvation must be founded on the terms on which it is promised that the mediation of our Saviour shall be applied to us, namely, obedience; and where obedience has failed, then, as suppletory to it, repentance. But what man can say that his obedience has been such as he would approve of in another, or even in himself, upon close examination, or that his repentance has not been such as to require being repented of?

No man can be sure that his obedience and repentance will obtain salvation.

Miss K. But divine intimation of acceptance may be made to the soul.

J. Madam, it may; but I should not think the better of a man who should tell me, on his death-bed, he was sure of salvation. A man cannot be sure himself that he has divine intimation of acceptance, much less can he make others sure that he has it.

B. Then, sir, we must be contented to acknowledge that death is a terrible thing?

J. Yes, sir. I have made no approaches to a state which can look on it as not terrible.

Miss K. (With peaceful serenity.) Does not St. Paul say, I have fought the good fight of faith, I have finished my course; henceforth is laid up for me a crown of life.

J. Yes, madam; but here was a man inspired, a man who had been converted by supernatural interposition.

Had not the conversation been interrupted here Miss Knowles would have doubtless re-

ferred the wise Doctor to the great and goodly company of confessors and martyrs, and other saints who, with as full and rational assurance as that of Paul, have passed in triumph to possess the immortal crown.

A weak faith and a mighty bigotry are very naturally allied, as evidenced in another conversation between the same parties. An amiable young lady, who had been a favorite of Johnson, and who had retained a great respect for him, felt it to be her duty to leave the Church of England, and attach herself to the more simple worship of the Friends. Miss Knowles, in the gentlest and most persuasive manner, attempts to reconcile the matter to the mind of Johnson.

J. (Very angrily.) Madam, she is an odious wench. She could not have any proper conviction that it was her duty to change her religion, which is the most important of all subjects, and should be studied with all care and with all the helps we can get. She knew no more of the Church which she left, and

that which she embraced, than she did of the difference between the Copernican and Ptolemaic systems.

Miss K. She had the New Testament before her.

J. Madam, she could not understand the New Testament, the most difficult book in the world, for which the study of a life is required.

Miss K. It is clear as to essentials.

J. But not as to controversial points. The heathen were easily converted, because they had nothing to give up; but we ought not, without very strong conviction indeed, to desert the religion in which we have been educated. That is the religion given you, the religion in which it may be said Providence has placed you. If you live conscientiously in that religion you may be safe. But error is dangerous indeed, if you err when you choose a religion for yourself.

Miss K. Must we then go by implicit faith?

J. Why, madam, the greatest part of our knowledge is implicit faith; and as to religion,

have we heard all that a disciple of Confucius, all that a Mohammedan, can say for himself?"

Alas for poor human nature! How much holier, more Christian like and sublime would it have been had the venerable Doctor, in place of all his shallowness and misplaced wrath, lifted up his hands heavenward, saying, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity! Amen."

CHAPTER XXX.

A PLEASANTER incident succeeds.

Forty-nine years had, at this time, elapsed since Johnson took leave of Oxford University. Returning from church on Sabbath, there accosted him an elderly man who proved to be one of his fellow-students in college, and whom he had not seen in all these years. The stranger inquired of Johnson whether he remembered one Edwards. "I did not, at first, recollect the man," says Johnson, "but gradually, as we walked along, recovered it."

Mr. Edwards is described as "a delicate-looking elderly man in gray clothes and a wig of many curls." It seems that he had practiced long as a solicitor in Chancery, but was now managing a small farm in the country, and came to town twice a week. Johnson, Mr. Boswell, and Mr. Edwards sit down in the Doctor's library and talk together. Who would

not be interested to listen to a conversation occurring under such circumstances?

Johnson. From your having practiced the law long, sir, I presume you must be rich."

Edwards. No, sir; I got a good deal of money, but I had a number of poor relations to whom I gave a great part of it.

J. You have been rich in the most valuable sense of the word.

E. But I shall not die rich.

J. Nay more, sir, it is better to *live* rich than to *die* rich.

E. I wish I had continued at college.

J. Why do you wish that, sir.

E. Because I think I should have had a much easier life than mine has been. I should have been a parson, and had a good living, like Bloxam and several others, and lived comfortably.

J. Sir, the life of a parson—of a conscientious clergyman—is not easy. I have always considered a clergyman as the father of a larger family than he is able to maintain. I would rather have Chancery suits upon my hands than

the cure of souls. No, sir, I do not envy a clergyman's life as an easy life, nor do I envy the clergyman who makes it an easy life. (Here taking himself up all of a sudden, he exclaimed,) O, Mr. Edwards! I'll convince you that I recollect you. Do you remember our drinking together at an ale-house near Pembroke-gate? At that time you told me of the Eton boy, who, when verses on our Saviour's turning water into wine were prescribed as an exercise, brought up a single line, which was highly admired:

"Vidit et embuit lympha pudica Deum;"

and I told you of another fine line in Camden's Remains; a eulogy upon one of our kings, who was succeeded by his son, a prince of equal merit:

"Mira cano; Sol occubuit, nox nulla secuta est."

E. You are a philosopher, Doctor.

J. I have tried, too, in my time, to be a philosopher; but, I don't know how, cheerfulness was always breaking in. Mr. Burke, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. Courtenay, Mr. Malone, and, in-

deed, all the eminent men to whom I have mentioned this, have thought it an exquisite trait of character. The truth is, that philosophy, like religion, is too generally supposed to be hard and severe; at least so grave as to exclude all gayety.

E. I have been twice married, Doctor. You, I suppose, have never known what it was to have a wife.

J. Sir, I have known what it was to have a wife, and (in a solemn, tender, faltering tone) I have known what it was to *lose a wife.* It had almost broke my heart.

E. How do you live, sir? For my part, I must have my regular meals, and a glass of good wine. I find I require it.

J. I now drink no wine, sir. Early in life I drank wine; for many years I drank none. I then, for some years, drank a great deal.

E. Some hogsheads, I warrant you.

J. I then had a severe illness, and left it off; and I have never begun it again. I never felt any difference upon myself from eating one

thing rather than another, nor from one kind of weather rather than another. There are people, I believe, who feel a difference; but I am not one of them. And as to regular meals, I have fasted from the Sunday's dinner to the Tuesday's dinner without any inconvenience. I believe it is best to eat just as one is hungry; but a man who is in business, or a man who has a family, must have stated meals. I am a straggler. I may leave this town and go to Grand Cairo without being missed here, or observed there.

E. Don't you eat supper, sir?

J. No, sir.

E. For my part, now, I consider supper as a turnpike through which we must pass in order to get to bed.

J. You are a lawyer, Mr. Edwards. Lawyers know life practically. A bookish man should always have them to converse with. They have what he wants.

E. I am grown old; I am sixty-five.

J. I shall be sixty-eight next birth-day.

Come, sir, drink water, and put in for a hundred.

Mr. Edwards mentioned a gentleman who had left his whole fortune to Pembroke College.

J. Whether to leave one's whole fortune to a college be right must depend upon circumstances. I would leave the interest of the fortune I bequeathed to a college to my relations or my friends, for their lives. It is the same thing to a college, which is a permanent society, whether it gets the money now or twenty years hence; and I would wish to make my relations or friends feel the benefit of it.

We must of course receive all this as true, but it is all very strange as well. We do not marvel so much that Johnson had not recognized Edwards in all this long time. But what about the latter? Had not the fame of Johnson been familiar to him for years? Did he not know, first as well as last, that the famous Dr. Johnson was the Johnson of his school days? Did he not know that London was his home? Had he never met him and recognized him

until this Sabbath day? And if he recognized him now, why did he not years before? And if he might have selected him long years ago, and declined to do so, why hail him now, after the long lapse of half a century?

But inquiries are useless. It is one of the mysteries, unless the following notice may partially explain. Three years after the interview of Johnson and Edwards, as above related, they encountered each other again and at St. Clement's Church. Boswell addressing him said, "I think, sir, Dr. Johnson and you meet only at Church." "Sir," said he, "it is the best place we can meet in, except heaven, and I hope we shall meet there too."

Dr. Johnson afterward told Boswell that there was very little communication between Edwards and him after their unexpected renewal of acquaintance. "But," said he, smiling, "he met me once and said, 'I am told you have written a very pretty book called the Rambler.' I was unwilling that he should leave the world in total darkness, and sent him a set."

CHAPTER XXXI.

In this year, (1781,) and at seventy-two years of age, Dr. Johnson gave to the world his "Lives of the English Poets." About four years before "a meeting was held, consisting of about forty of the most respectable booksellers of London, when it was agreed that an elegant and uniform edition of the English poets should be immediately printed, with a concise account of the life of each author by Dr. Samuel Johnson, and that three persons should be deputed to wait upon Dr. Johnson to solicit him to undertake the Lives, namely, T. Davies, Strahan, and Cadell. The Doctor very politely undertook it, and seemed exceedingly pleased with the proposal."

He speaks of writing this work in his "usual way, dilatorily and hastily, unwilling to work and working with vigor and haste; written, I hope, in such a manner as may tend to the

promotion of piety." Mrs. Thrale adds: "This facility of writing, and this dilatoriness to write, Dr. Johnson always retained from the days that he lay a-bed and dictated his first publication to Mr. Hector, who acted as his amanuensis, to the moment he made me copy out those variations in Pope's Homer which are printed in the *Lives of the Poets.*"

Of this production Mr. Boswell writes: "This is a work which, of all Dr. Johnson's writings, will, perhaps, be read most generally, and with most pleasure. Philology and biography were his favorite pursuits, and those who lived most in intimacy with him heard him upon all occasions when there was a proper opportunity take delight in expatiating upon the various merits of the English poets, upon the niceties of their characters, and the events of their progress through the world which they contributed to illuminate. His mind was so full of that kind of information, and it was so well arranged in his memory, that in performing what he had undertaken in this way he had little more to

do than to put his thoughts upon paper, exhibiting, first, each poet's life, and then subjoining a critical examination of his genius and works. But when he began to write, the subject swelled in such a manner that instead of prefaces to each poet of no more than a few pages, as he originally intended, he produced an ample, rich, and most entertaining view of them in every respect. . . . The booksellers, justly sensible of the great additional value of the copyright, presented him with another hundred pounds, over and above the two hundred for which his agreement was to furnish such prefaces as he thought fit.

"This was, however," adds Mr. Boswell, "but a small recompense for such a collection of biography, and such principles and illustrations of criticism, as, if digested and arranged in one system by some modern Aristotle or Longinus, might form a code upon that subject such as no other nation can show."

CHAPTER XXXII.

It was in this same year (1781) that Dr. Johnson was called to bury his old and steadfast friend, Mr. Thrale.

"With him," he writes, "were buried many of my hopes and pleasures. . . . I felt almost the last flutter of his pulse, and looked for the last time upon the face that, for fifteen years, had never been turned on me but with respect or benignity. . . . The decease of him from whose friendship I had obtained many opportunities for amusement, and to whom I turned my thoughts as to a refuge from misfortunes, has left me heavy. I enjoyed his favor for almost a fourth part of my life."

"Mr. Thrale's death," writes Boswell, "was a very essential loss to Johnson, who, although he did not foresee all that afterward happened, was sufficiently convinced that the comforts which Mr. Thrale's family afforded him would

now, in a great measure, cease. He, however, continued to show a kind attention to his widow and children as long as it was acceptable, and he took upon him, with a very earnest concern, the office of one of his executors, the importance of which seemed greater than usual to him from his circumstances having been always such that he had scarcely any share in the real business of life. His friends of the Club were in hopes that Mr. Thrale might have made a liberal provision for him, which, as Mr. Thrale left no son and a very large fortune, it would have been highly to his honor to have done, and, considering Johnson's age, could not have been of long duration; but he bequeathed him only two hundred pounds, which was the legacy given to each of his executors.

On the day after Mr. Thrale's death Johnson addresses the following note to the widow:

"DEAREST MADAM: Of your injunctions to pray for you and write to you I hope to leave

neither unobserved; and I hope to find you willing, in a short time, to alleviate your trouble by some other exercise of the mind. I am not without my part of the calamity. No death since that of my wife has ever oppressed me like this. But let us remember that we are in the hands of Him who knows when to give and when to take away; who will look upon us with mercy through all our variations of existence, and who invites us to call on him in the day of trouble. Call upon him in this great revolution of life, and call with confidence. You will then find comfort for the past, and support for the future. He that has given you happiness in marriage, to a degree of which, without personal knowledge, I should have thought the description fabulous, can give you another mode of happiness as a mother, and, at last, the happiness of losing all temporal cares in the thoughts of an eternity in heaven.

"I do not exhort you to reason yourself into tranquillity. We must first pray, and then labor; first implore the blessing of God, and

then use those means which he puts into our hands. Cultivated ground has few weeds; a mind occupied by lawful business has little room for useless regret.

"We read the will to-day; but I will not fill my first letter with any other account than that, with all my zeal for your advantage, I am satisfied; and that the other executors, more used to consider property than I, commended it for wisdom and equity. Yet why should I not tell you that you have five hundred pounds for your immediate expenses, and two thousand pounds a year, with both the houses and all the goods."

A few days afterward he writes again:

"DEAREST MADAM: That you are gradually recovering your tranquillity is the effect to be humbly expected from trust in God. Do not represent life as darker than it is. Your loss has been very great, but you retain more than almost any other can hope to possess. You are high in the opinion of mankind; you have

children from whom much pleasure may be expected; and that you will find many friends you have no reason to doubt. Of my friendship, be it more or less, I hope you think yourself certain, without much art or care. It will not be easy for me to repay the benefits that I have received; but I hope to be always ready at your call. Our sorrow has different effects; you are withdrawn into solitude, and I am driven into company. I am afraid of thinking what I have lost. I never had such a friend before. Let me have your prayers."

On the following day he again addresses her:

"You will not suppose that much has happened since last night, nor, indeed, is this a time for talking much of loss and gain. The business of Christians is now, for a few days, in their own bosoms. God grant us to do it properly! I hope you gain ground on your affliction; I hope to overcome mine. You and Miss* must comfort one another. May you

* A daughter.

long live happily together! I have nobody whom I expect to share my uneasiness; nor, if I could communicate it, would it be less. I give it a little vent, and amuse it as I can. Let us pray for one another; and when we meet, we may try what fidelity and tenderness will do for us.

"There is no wisdom in useless and hopeless sorrow; but there is something in it so like virtue, that he who is wholly without it cannot be loved, nor will, by me at least, be thought worthy of esteem."

We conclude this chapter with the following somber entry, by Boswell, at about this time: "It was observed by myself, and other of Johnson's friends, that, soon after the decease of Mr. Thrale, his visits to Streatham became less and less frequent, and that he studiously avoided the mention of the place or family. It seems that between him and the widow there was a formal taking of leave," when he warmly commended them to the care of their heavenly Father.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE following extract from a letter to Mrs. Thrale will explain itself:

"On Monday, the 16th, I sat for my picture, and walked a considerable way with little inconvenience. In the afternoon and evening I felt myself light and easy, and began to plan schemes of life. Thus I went to bed, and in a short time waked and sat up, as has long been my custom, when I felt a confusion and indistinctness in my head, which lasted, I suppose, about half a minute. I was alarmed, and prayed God that however he might afflict my body, he would spare my understanding. This prayer, that I might try the integrity of my faculties, I made in Latin verse. The lines were not very good, but I knew them not to be very good; I made them easily, and concluded myself to be unimpaired in my faculties.

"Soon after I perceived that I had suffered a

paralytic stroke, and that my speech was taken from me. I had no pain, and so little dejection in this dreadful state that I wondered at my own apathy, and considered that, perhaps, death itself, when it should come, would excite less horror than seems now to attend it."

A fortnight after he wrote as follows to Boswell:

"On the 17th of last month, about three in the morning, as near as I can guess, I perceived myself almost totally deprived of speech. I had no pain. My organs were so obstructed that I could say *No*, but could scarcely say *Yes*. I wrote the necessary directions, for it pleased God to spare my hand, and sent for Dr. Heberden and Dr. Brocklesby. Between the time in which I discovered my own disorder and that in which I sent for the doctors I had, I believe, in spite of my surprise and solicitude, a little sleep, and nature began to renew its operations. They came, and gave the directions which the disease required, and from that time I have been continually improving in

articulation. I can now speak; but the nerves are weak, and I cannot continue discourse long; but strength, I hope, will return. The physicians consider me as cured."

About this time Mrs. Williams died, another of the inmates of Dr. Johnson's house, and one of the objects of his beneficence. In the following note to Mrs. Montagu he thus informs her of this event;

"MADAM: That respect which is always due to beneficence makes it fit that you should be informed, otherwise than by the papers, that on the 6th of this month died your pensioner, Anna Williams, of whom it may be truly said that she received your bounty with gratitude, and enjoyed it with propriety. You, perhaps, have still her prayers.

"You have, madam, the satisfaction of having alleviated the sufferings of a woman of great merit, both intellectual and moral. Her curiosity was universal, her knowledge was very extensive, and she sustained forty years

of misery with steady fortitude. Thirty years and more she had been my companion, and her death has left me very desolate.

"That I have not written sooner you may impute to absence, to ill health, to any thing rather than want of regard to the benefactress of my departed friend. I am, madam, your most humble servant."

To another lady he writes:

"Last month died Mrs. Williams, who had been to me for thirty years in the place of a sister. Her knowledge was great, and her conversation pleasing. I now live in cheerless solitude."

In the same letter he adds concerning himself:

"My two last years have passed under the pressure of successive diseases. I have lately had the gout with some severity. But I wonderfully escaped the operation which I mentioned, and am upon the whole restored to health beyond my own expectation.

"As we daily see our friends die round us, we that are left must cling closer, and if we can do nothing more, at least pray for one another; and remember that as others die we must die too, and prepare ourselves diligently for the last great trial."

As this chapter commenced with letters, it may, perhaps, properly close in like manner. The following note to Mrs. Thrale, penned about the same time with the above extracts, comprises sentiments that are not without interest:

"Since you have written to me with the attention and tenderness of ancient time, your letters give me a great part of the pleasure which a life of solitude admits. You will never bestow any share of your good-will on one who deserves better. Those that have loved longest love best. A sudden blaze of kindness may, by a single blast of coldness, be extinguished; but that fondness which length of time has connected with many circumstances and occasions, though it may for awhile be

depressed by disgust or resentment, with or without a cause, is hourly revived by accidental recollection. To those that have lived long together every thing heard and every thing seen recalls some pleasure communicated or some benefit conferred, some petty quarrel or some slight endearment. Esteem of great powers, or amiable qualities newly discovered, may embroider a day or a week, but a friendship of twenty years is interwoven with the texture of a life. A friend may be often found and lost; but an *old friend* never can be found, and nature has provided that he cannot easily be lost."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

In this chapter we hazard the insertion of one or two more conversations, especially as they are a part of such as occurred in the last year of Dr. Johnson's life.

The following is interesting, as several names are mentioned that are more familiar to us than many English names of the last century:

"I dined yesterday at Mrs. Garrick's with Mrs. Carter, Miss Hannah More, and Fanny Burney. Three such women are not to be found; I know not where I could find a fourth, except Mrs. Lennox, who is superior to them all."

Boswell. What! had you them all to yourself, sir?

Johnson. I had them all, as much as they were had; but it might have been better had there been more company there.

B. Might not Mrs. Montague have been a fourth?

J. Sir, Mrs. Montague does not make a trade of her wit; but Mrs. Montague is a very extraordinary woman; she has a constant stream of conversation, and it is always impregnated; it has always meaning.

B. Mr. Burke has a constant stream of conversation.

J. Yes, sir; if a man were to go, by chance, at the same time with Burke under a shed to shun a shower, he would say, "This is an extraordinary man." If Burke should go into a stable to see his horse dressed, the ostler would say, "We have had an extraordinary man here."

B. Foote was a man who never failed in conversation. If he had gone into a stable—

J. Sir, if he had gone into the stable the ostler would have said, "Here has been a comical fellow;" but he would not have respected him.

B. And, sir, the ostler would have answered him; would have given him as good as he brought, as the common saying is.

J. Yes, sir; and Foote would have answered the ostler. When Burke does not descend to be merry his conversation is very superior indeed. There is no proportion between the powers which he shows in serious talk and jocularity. When he lets himself down to that he is in the kennel.

In this last sentiment respecting Burke several competent judges seem to have disagreed with Johnson, and insisted that the former was often very happy in merry conversation as well as in that which was more serious.

In the midst of this conversation Johnson called out to the company with a sudden air of exultation, "O, gentlemen, I must tell you a very great thing! The Empress of Russia has ordered 'The Rambler' to be translated into the Russian Language; so I shall be read on the banks of the Wolga. Horace boasts that his fame would extend as far as the banks of the Rhone; now the Wolga is further from me than the Rhone was from Horace."

Boswell. You must certainly be pleased with this, sir.

Johnson. I am pleased, sir, to be sure. A man is pleased to find he has succeeded in that which he has endeavored to do.

Soon after this he is on a visit at Oxford in company with Boswell, and among many other conversations is one touching the Roman Catholic Church.

J. If you join the Papists externally they will not interrogate you strictly as to your belief in their tenets. No reasoning Papist believes every article of their faith. There is one side on which a good man might be persuaded to embrace it. A good man of timorous disposition, in great doubt of his acceptance with God, and pretty credulous, may be glad to be of a Church where there are so many helps to get to heaven. I would be a Papist if I could. I have fear enough; but an obstinate rationality prevents it. I shall never be a Papist, unless on the near approach of death, of which I have a very

great terror. I wonder that women are not all Papists.

B. They are not more afraid of death than men are.

J. Because they are less wicked.

Dr. Adams. They are more pious.

J. No, hang 'em, they are not more pious. A wicked fellow is the most pious when he takes to it. He'll beat you all at piety.

He argued in defense of some of the peculiar tenets of the Church of Rome. As to the giving the bread only to the laity, he said, "They may think that in what is merely ritual, deviations from the primitive mode may be admitted on the ground of convenience; and I think they are as well warranted to make this alteration, as we are to substitute sprinkling in the room of the ancient baptism.*

As to the invocation of saints, he said, "Though I do not think it authorized, it appears to me that 'the communion of saints'

*This would seem to imply that Johnson received the immersion theory of baptism.

in the Creed means the communion with the saints in heaven, as connected with the holy Catholic Church." He admitted the influence of evil spirits upon our minds, and said, "Nobody who believes the New Testament can deny it."

In the following conversation we have Dr. Johnson's views touching the casuistical question, *Whether it be allowable at any time to depart from truth?*

Johnson. The general rule is that truth should never be violated; because it is of the utmost importance to the comfort of life that we should have a full security by mutual faith and occasional inconveniences should be willingly suffered that we may preserve it. There must, however, be some exceptions. If, for instance, a murderer should ask you which way a man is gone, you may tell him what is not true, because you are under a previous obligation not to betray a man to a murderer.

Boswell. Supposing the person who wrote

"Junius" were asked whether he was the author, might he deny it?

J. I don't know what to say to this. If you were *sure* that he wrote "Junius," would you, if he denied it, think as well of him afterward? Yet it may be urged that what a man has no right to ask, you may refuse to communicate; and there is no other effectual mode of preserving a secret, and an important secret, the discovery of which may be very hurtful to you, but a flat denial; for if you are silent, or hesitate, or evade, it will be held equivalent to a confession.

"But, stay, sir; here is another case. Supposing the author had told me confidentially that he had written 'Junius,' and I were asked if he had, I should hold myself at liberty to deny it, as being under a previous promise, express or implied, to conceal it. Now what I ought to do for the author, may I not do for myself? But I deny the lawfulness of telling a lie to a sick man for fear of alarming him. You have no business with consequences; you

are not sure what effect your telling him that he is in danger may have. It may bring his distemper to a crisis, and that may cure him. Of all lying, I have the greatest abhorrence of this, because I believe it has been frequently practiced on myself."

The following conversation with Dr. Adams, at Oxford, seems to present to us a melancholy view of Dr. Johnson's religious experience as he was verging very near the close of life. The Doctor was acknowledging his oppressive fear of death, when Dr. Adams suggested that God was infinitely good.

Johnson. That he is infinitely good, as far as the perfection of his nature will allow, I certainly believe: but it is necessary for good, upon the whole, that individuals should be punished. As to an *individual*, therefore, he is not infinitely good; and as I cannot be *sure* that I have fulfilled the conditions on which salvation is granted, I am afraid I may be one of those who shall be damned. (Looking dismally.)

A. What do you mean by damned?

J. (Passionately and loudly.) Sent to hell, sir, and punished everlastingly.

A. I don't believe that doctrine.

J. Hold, sir; do you not believe that some will be punished?

A. Being excluded from heaven will be a punishment; yet there may be no great positive suffering.

J. Well, sir; but, if you admit of any degree of punishment, there is an end of your argument for infinite goodness, simply considered; for infinite goodness would inflict no punishment whatever. There is not infinite goodness physically considered; morally there is.

Boswell. But may not a man attain to such a degree of hope as not to be uneasy from the fear of death?

J. A man may have such a degree of hope as to keep him quiet. You see I am not quiet, from the vehemence with which I talk; but I do not despair.

Mrs. Adams. You seem, sir, to forget the merits of our Redeemer.

J. Madam, I do not forget the merits of my Redeemer; but my Redeemer has said that he will set some on his right hand and some on his left. (He was in gloomy agitation, and said, "I'll have no more on't.")

CHAPTER XXXV.

Dr. Johnson was now struggling within the stern grasp of those same two diseases—asthma and dropsy—which had laid him up all the preceding winter, and which, though partially alleviated by the warm season succeeding, had returned upon him in the autumn with increased virulence.

At Litchfield, his native town, he thus, under date of Nov. 5, 1784, addresses Mr. Boswell:

"Dear Sir: I have, this summer, sometimes amended and sometimes relapsed; but, upon the whole, have lost ground very much. My legs are extremely weak, and my breath very short, and the water is now increasing upon me.* In this uncomfortable state your letters used to relieve; what is the reason that I have them no longer."

* Dropsy.

Soon after penning this note to Boswell he returned to his home in London, where both the asthma and dropsy at once became more violent and distressful. But death having always been to him an object of terror, he still clung to life with an energy that was wonderful. Yet as he was constantly growing more feeble, he was induced by one of his old and long-tried friends, Mr. Hawkins, to make and execute his will, by which he settled upon his colored servant, Francis Barber, an annuity of seventy pounds, or three hundred and fifty dollars, and bequeathed the residue of his property to certain relatives and some other parties.

He now seems to have relinquished nearly all hope of life, and when one of his physicians expressed to him a hope that he was better, "No, sir," replies Johnson, "you cannot conceive with what acceleration I advance toward death."

To another of his physicians, however, Dr. Brocklesby, in whom he placed great confidence, he proposed that the Doctor would tell

him plainly whether he could recover. "Give me," said he, "a direct answer." The Doctor, having first asked him if he could bear the whole truth, which way soever it might lead, and being answered that he could, declared that, in his opinion, he could not recover without a miracle. "Then," said Johnson, "I will take no more physic, not even my opiates; for I have prayed that I may render up my soul to God unclouded." In this resolution he persevered, and, at the same time, used only the weakest kind of sustenance.

His last days were characterized by sincere penitence, prayer, and hope; and on the evening of Dec. 13, 1784, uttering the words, *Jam moriturus*, "Now I am about to die," he expired without a groan, or the least sign of pain or uneasiness.

The sickness of Dr. Johnson was attended with great suffering, yet there are ample testimonies that, for some time before his death, "all his fears were calmed and absorbed by the prevalence of his faith and his trust in the

merits and propitiation of Jesus Christ." He "was perfectly composed, strong in hope, and resigned to death."

Dr. Johnson was buried in Westminster Abbey, and a monument to his memory was erected, by a number of his friends and admirers, in St. Paul's Cathedral.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

This little work would hardly be complete unless it should present more fully the views of Dr. Johnson on certain important topics already introduced in the preceding pages.

On the subjects of *books* and *reading* we must note some thoughts.

"Alas, Madam!" he says to Mrs. Thrale, "how few books are there of which one ever can arrive at the *last* page! Was there ever yet any thing written by mere man that was wished longer by its readers, excepting 'Don Quixote,' 'Robinson Crusoe,' and 'The Pilgrim's Progress?'" Next to Homer's "Iliad," he ranked, as a book of entertainment, the work of Cervantes as the greatest in the world.

"He had sometimes fits of reading, very violent; and when he was in earnest about getting through with some particular pages he

would be quite lost to company, and withdraw all his attention to what he was reading without the smallest knowledge or care about the noise made around him."

He was heard to say that, except such books as he considered it his duty to read, he never read but one through in his whole life. This book was the Letters of Lady Mary Montague.*

"It is strange," said Johnson, "that there should be so little reading in the world and so much writing. People in general do not willingly read if they can have any thing else to amuse them. There must be an external impulse—emulation, or vanity, or avarice. The progress which the understanding makes through a book has more pain than pleasure in it. Language is scanty, and inadequate to express the nice gradations and mixtures of our feelings. No man reads a book of science

* A lady of wit and fashion, born 1690, and died 1762. Her "Letters" are still celebrated, of which an American edition has been issued, edited by Mrs. S. J. Hale.

from pure inclination. The books that we do read with pleasure are light compositions which contain a quick succession of events. However, I have this year read all Virgil through. I read a book of the Æneid every night, so it was done in twelve nights, and I had a great delight in it.*

"Dr. Johnson advised me," said Boswell, "to have as many books about me as I could, that I might read upon any subject upon which I had a desire for instruction at the time. What you read *then* you will remember; but if you have not a book immediately ready, and the subject molds in your mind, it is a chance if you have again a desire to study it." He added: "If a man never has an eager desire for instruction, he should prescribe a task for himself. But it is better when a man reads from immediate inclination."

He used to say that no man read long together with a folio on the table. "Books,"

* At the time of this reading Dr. Johnson was seventy-four years of age.

said he, "that you may carry to the fire, and hold readily in your hand, are the most useful after all. Such books form the mass of general and easy reading. . . . A man will often look, and be tempted to go on, when he would have been frightened at books of a larger size, and of a more erudite appearance."

To a young man who had been advised to read to the end of whatever books he should begin to read Johnson remarked: "This is surely a strange advice. You may as well resolve that whatever men you get acquainted with you are to keep to them for life. A book may be good for nothing; or there may be only one thing in it worth knowing; are we to read it all through? These Voyages, (pointing to three large volumes,) who will read them through? A man had better work his way before the mast than read them through. They will be eaten by rats and mice before they are read through. There can be little entertainment in such books; one set of savages is like another."

On another occasion he said that for general improvement a man should read whatever his inclination prompts him to, though, to be sure, if a man has a science to learn he must regularly and resolutely advance. . . . What we read with inclination makes a much stronger impression. If we read without inclination half the mind is employed in fixing the attention, so there is but one half to be employed on what we read. . . . If a man begins to read in the middle of a book, and feels an inclination to go on, let him not quit it to go to the beginning. He may, perhaps, not feel again the inclination."

At another time, while enlarging on the benefits of reading, he combated the notion that knowledge enough may be acquired in conversation. "The foundation," he said, "must be laid by reading. General principles must be had from books, which, however, must be brought to the test of real life. In conversation you never get a system. What is said upon a subject is to be gathered from a hun-

dred people. The parts of a truth which a man gets thus are at such a distance from each other that he never attains to a full view."

"Snatches of reading," said Johnson, "will not make a Bentley or a Clarke. They are, however, in a certain degree, advantageous. I would put a child into a library (where no unfit books are) and let him read at his choice. A child should not be discouraged from reading any thing he takes a liking to, from a notion that it is above his reach. If that be the case, the child will soon find it out and desist; if not, he, of course, gains the instruction, which is so much the more likely to come from the inclination with which he takes up the study."

He adds at another time: "I am always for getting a boy forward in his learning, for that is a sure good. I would let him at first read *any* English book which happens to engage his attention, because you have done a great deal when you have brought him to have

entertainment from a book. He'll get better books afterward."

"I would never," said he again, "desire a young man to neglect his business for the purpose of pursuing his studies, because it is unreasonable. I would only desire him to read at those hours when he would otherwise be unemployed. I will not promise that he will be a Bentley; but if he be a lad of any parts he will certainly make a sensible man."

"Dr. Johnson," said Mrs. Thrale, "had never, by his own account, been a close student, and used to advise young people never to be without a book in their pocket, to be read at by-times when they had nothing else to do. 'It has been by that means,' said he, 'that all my knowledge has been gained, except what I have picked up by running about the world with my wits ready to observe, and my tongue ready to talk. A man is seldom in a humor to unlock his book-case, set his desk in order, and betake himself to serious study;

but a retentive memory will do something, and a fellow shall have strange credit given him if he can but recollect striking passages from different books, keep the authors separate in his head, and bring his stock of knowledge artfully into play."

We conclude this chapter with a copy of a list of books which Johnson recommended to a young man for perusal. It is not without interest as coming from such a source, and as being a hundred years old:

"Universal History, (ancient,) Rollin's Ancient History, Puffendorf's Introduction to History, Vertot's History of Knights of Malta, Vertot's Revolution of Portugal, Vertot's Revolution of Sweden, Carte's History of England, Present State of England, Geographical Grammar, Prideaux's Connection, Nelson's Feasts and Fasts, Duty of Man, Gentleman's Religion, Clarendon's History, Watts's Improvement of the Mind, Watts's Logic, Nature Displayed, Lowth's English Grammar, Blackwall on the Classics, Sherlock's Sermons, Burnett's Life of

Hale, Dupin's History of the Church, Shuckford's Connections, Law's Serious Call, Walton's Complete Angler, Sandys' Travels, Sprat's History of the Royal Society, England's Gazetteer, Goldsmith's Roman History, some Commentaries on the Bible."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Dr. Johnson's remarkable powers of conversation have been partially illustrated in the preceding pages. Some further testimonies of this may not be out of place.

"I do not care," says one, "on what subject Johnson talks; but I love better to hear him talk than any body. He either gives you new thoughts or a new coloring.

"As he was a very talking man himself, he had an idea that nothing promoted happiness so much as conversation. . . . Conversation was all he required to make him happy; and when he would have tea made at two o'clock in the morning, it was only that there might be a certainty of detaining his companions round him."

Of a pretty but silent young lady he said: "She says nothing, sir; a talking blackamoor were better than a white creature who adds

nothing; and sitting down before one thus desperately silent takes away the confidence one should have in the company of her chair if she were once out of it."

"No one was, however, less willing to begin any discourse than himself. His friend, Mr. Thomas Tyers, said he was like the ghosts who never speak till they are spoken to; and he liked the expression so well that he often repeated it. He had, indeed, no necessity to lead the stream of chat to a favorite channel, that his fullness on the subject might be shown more clearly, whatever was the topic; and he usually left the choice to others. His information enlightened, his argument strengthened, and his wit made it ever remembered. Of him it might have been said, as he often delighted to say of Edmund Burke, 'that you could not stand five minutes with that man beneath a shed while it rained, but you must be convinced you had been standing with the greatest man you had ever yet seen.'

"Having reduced his amusements to the

pleasures of conversation merely, what wonder that Johnson should have had an avidity for the sole delight he was able to enjoy? No man conversed so well as he on every subject; no man so acutely discerned the reason of every fact, the motive of every action, the end of every design.

"The conversation of Johnson is strong and clear, and may be compared to an antique statue, where every vein and muscle is distinct and bold."

Another of his friends writes that his conversation was conducted in conformity with the following precept of Lord Bacon:

"In all kinds of speech, either pleasant, grave, severe, or ordinary, it is convenient to speak leisurely, and rather drawlingly than hastily; because hasty speech confounds the memory, and oftentimes, besides the unseemliness, drives a man either to stammering, a nonplus, or harping on that which should follow; whereas a slow speech confirmeth the memory, addeth a conceit of wisdom to

the hearers, besides a seemliness of speech and countenance."

"Dr. Johnson's method of conversation was certainly calculated to excite attention, and to amuse and instruct, (as it happened,) without wearying or confusing his company. He was always most perfectly clear and perspicuous; and his language was so accurate, and his sentences so neatly constructed, that his conversation might have been all printed without any correction. At the same time it was easy and natural; the accuracy of it had no appearance of labor, constraint, or stiffness; he seemed more correct than others by the force of habit, and the customary exercises of his powerful mind." *

From these extracts relating to Dr. Johnson's faculty of conversation, let us pass to adduce a few of his sayings and views upon this interesting subject.

Mr. Boswell was complaining of having

* The influence exercised by Johnson's conversation directly upon those with whom he lived, and indirectly on the whole literary world, was altogether without a parallel.—MACAULAY.

dined at a splendid table without hearing one sentence of conversation worthy of being remembered.

Johnson. Sir, there seldom is any such conversation.

Boswell. Why, then, meet at table?

J. Why, to eat and drink together, and to promote kindness; and, sir, this is better done where there is no solid conversation; for when there is, people differ in opinion, and get into bad humor, or some of the company who are not capable of such conversation are left out, and feel themselves uneasy. It was for this reason Sir R. Walpole said he always talked coarsely at his table, because in that all could join.

"A man," said Johnson, "should not talk much of himself, nor much of any particular person. He should take care not to be made a proverb, and, therefore, should avoid having any one topic of which people can say, 'We shall hear him upon it.' There was a Dr. Oldfield, who was always talking of the Duke of Marlborough. He came into a coffee-house one day,

and told that his Grace had spoken in the House of Lords for half an hour. 'Did he, indeed, speak for half an hour?' said one. 'Yes.' 'And what did he say of Dr. Oldfield?' 'Nothing.' 'Why, then, sir, he was very ungrateful; for Dr. Oldfield could not have spoken for a quarter of an hour without saying something of him.'"

Of Goldsmith Johnson said: "He was not an agreeable companion, for he talked always for fame. A man who does so never can be pleasing. The man who talks to unburden his mind is the man to delight you."

He said of Burke, that he was not so agreeable as the variety of his knowledge would have otherwise made him, because he talked partly from ostentation. Johnson insisted that the happiest conversation is that of which nothing is distinctly remembered but a general effect of pleasing impression. Elsewhere he says: "That is the happiest conversation where there is no competition, no vanity, but a calm, quiet interchange of sentiments."

He used to say that he made it a constant rule to talk as well as he could, both as to sentiment and expression; by which means what had been originally effort became familiar and easy. The consequence of this was observed to be, that his common conversation in all companies was such as to secure him universal attention, as something above the usual colloquial style was expected.

"Questioning," said Johnson, "is not the mode of conversation among gentlemen. It is assuming a superiority, and it is particularly wrong to question a man concerning himself. There may be parts of his former life which he may not wish to be made known to other persons, or even brought to his own recollection."

Johnson himself could not endure in conversation to be teased with questions. A gentleman conversing with him on one occasion asked so many, as "What did you do, sir?" "What did you say, sir?" that he at last grew enraged, and said, "I will not be put to the

question. Don't you consider, sir, that these are not the manners of a gentleman? I will not be baited with *what* and *why;* what is this? what is that? why is a cow's tail long? why is a fox's tail bushy?" The gentleman, who was a good deal out of countenance, said, "Why, sir, you are so good that I venture to trouble you." Johnson replied: "Sir, my being so *good* is no reason why you should be so *ill.*"

We give one extract more. Speaking of conversation, Johnson said, "There must, in the first place, be knowledge—there must be materials; in the second place, there must be a command of words; in the third place, there must be imagination, to place things in such views as they are not commonly seen in; and, in the fourth place, there must be presence of mind, and a resolution that is not to be overcome by failures. This last is an essential requisite; for want of it many people do not excel in conversation."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

WHATEVER may have been Dr. Johnson's powers of conversation, it is certain that his power of composition was equally extraordinary. Hence, to quote some remarks of his touching this general subject will, doubtless, not be unacceptable.

On one occasion Dr. Johnson, Dr. Watson, and Mr. Boswell are conversing together, and we have the following interesting colloquy:

Johnson. I advise Chambers, and would advise every young man beginning to compose, to do it as fast as he can—to get a habit of having his mind to start promptly; it is so much more difficult to improve in speed than in accuracy.

Watson. I own I am for much attention to accuracy in composing, lest one should get bad habits of doing it in a slovenly manner.

J. Why, sir, you are confounding *doing* inaccurately with the *necessity* of doing inaccurately.

A man knows when his composition is inaccurate, and when he thinks fit he will correct it. But if a man is accustomed to compose slowly and with difficulty upon all occasions, there is danger that he may not compose at all, as we do not like to do that which is not done easily; and, at any rate, more time is consumed in a small matter than ought to be.

W. Dr. Hugh Blair has taken a week to compose a sermon.

J. Then, sir, that is for want of a habit of composing quickly, which I am insisting one should acquire.

W. Blair was not composing all the week, but only such hours as he found himself disposed for composition.

J. Nay, sir, unless you tell me the time he took you tell me nothing. If I say I took a week to walk a mile, and have had the gout five days, and been ill otherwise another day, I have taken but one day. I myself have composed about forty sermons. I have begun a sermon after dinner, and sent it off by the post that

night. I wrote forty-eight of the printed octavo pages of the "Life of Savage" at a sitting; but then I sat up all night. I have also written six sheets in a day of translation from the French.

Boswell. We have all observed how one man dresses himself slowly and another fast.

J. Yes, sir; it is wonderful how much time some people consume in dressing; taking up a thing and looking at it, and laying it down and taking it up again. Every one should get the habit of doing it quickly. I would say to a young divine, Here is your text; let me see how soon you can make a sermon. Then I would say, Let me see how much better you can make it. Thus I should see both his powers and his judgment.

Johnson once remarked that it is wonderful how little the mind is actively employed upon any one thing or subject. In illustration he added: "I once wrote for a magazine. I made a calculation that if I should write but a page a day, at the same rate I should, in ten years, write nine volumes in folio of an ordinary size

and print." "When a man writes from his own mind he writes very rapidly. The greatest part of a writer's time is spent in reading in order to write; a man will turn over half a library to make one book."

To a young clergyman he writes: "My advice is, that you attempt from time to time an original sermon; and in the labor of composition do not burden your mind with too much at once; do not exact from yourself at one effort of excogitation propriety of thought and elegance of expression. Invent first, and then embellish. The production of something where nothing was before is an act of greater energy than the expansion or decoration of the thing produced. Set down diligently your thoughts as they rise in the first words that occur, and when you have matter you will easily give it form: nor, perhaps, will this method be always necessary, for by habit your thoughts and diction will flow together. The composition of sermons is not very difficult. The divisions not only help the memory of the hearer, but direct

the judgment of the writer. They supply sources of invention, and keep every part in its proper place."

"A man," he observed, "should begin to write soon; for if he waits till his judgment is matured, his inability, through want of practice, to express his conceptions, will make the disproportion so great between what he sees and what he can attain that he will probably be discouraged from writing at all. As a proof of the justness of this remark we may instance what is related of the great Lord Granville, that, after he had written his letter giving an account of the battle of Dettingen, he said, 'Here is a letter expressed in terms not good enough for a tallow chandler to have used.'"

When some one was speaking of happy moments for composition, and how a man can write at one time and not at another. "Nay," said Johnson, "a man may write at any time if he will set himself *doggedly to it*."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

From the immense mass of Dr. Johnson's sayings, and of anecdotes associated with him, on a multitude of subjects, we select for our concluding chapter a few specimens additional to what have been already presented.

"Much," says Dr. Johnson, "may be done if a man puts his whole mind to a particular object. By doing so Norton (afterward speaker of the House of Commons) has made himself the great lawyer that he is allowed to be."

Boswell had stated to Johnson that Goldsmith had acquired more fame than all the military officers in a certain war, except the generals.

Johnson replied: "Why, sir, you will find ten thousand fit to do what they did, before you find one who does what Goldsmith has done. You must consider that a thing is valued according to its rarity. A pebble that paves

the street is in itself more useful than the diamond upon a lady's finger."

Of a young author Johnson remarked that he "should sell his first work for what the booksellers (publishers) will give, till it shall appear whether he is an author of merit, or, which is the same thing as to purchase-money, an author who pleases the public."

"A biography of a literary man, besides the common incidents of life, should tell us his studies, his mode of living, the means by which he attains to excellence, and his opinion of his own works." In another place he says, "The business (of a biographer) is to give a complete account of the person whose life he is writing, and to discriminate him from all other persons by any peculiarities of character or sentiment he may have."

He remarked of Dr. Priestley's theological works that "they tended to unsettle every thing and settle nothing." "To find a substitution," said he, "for violated morality

is the leading feature in all perversions of religion."

He gives the following argument for the truth of Christianity: "Besides the strong evidence which we have for it, there is a balance in its favor from the number of great men who have been convinced of its truth after a serious consideration of the question. Grotius was an acute man, a lawyer, a man accustomed to examine evidence, and he was convinced. Grotius was not a recluse, but a man of the world, who certainly had no bias to the side of religion. Sir Isaac Newton set out an infidel, and came to be a very firm believer."

Boswell asking him what of Baxter's works he should read, Johnson replied, "Read any of them; they are all good."

He thought Baxter's Reasons of the Christian Religion contained the best collection of the evidences of the divinity of the Christian system.

Of Wesley he remarked: "John Wesley's conversation is good, but he is never at leisure.

He is always obliged to go at a certain hour. This is very disagreeable to a man who loves to fold his legs and have out his talk, as I do."

As we have already seen, Johnson thought lightly of Whitefield's oratory. "His popularity, sir," said he, "is chiefly owing to the peculiarity of his manner. He would be followed by crowds were he to wear a night-cap in the pulpit, or were he to preach from a tree."

Elsewhere he descants upon Whitefield thus: "Whitefield never drew as much attention as a mountebank does. He did not draw attention by doing better than others, but by doing what was strange. Were Astley* to preach a sermon standing upon his head on a horse's back he would collect a multitude to hear him; but no wise man would say he had made a better sermon for that. I never treated Whitefield's ministry with contempt; I believe he did good. He had devoted himself to the

* A circus-rider.

lower class of mankind, and among them he was of use. But when familiarity and noise claim the praise due to knowledge, art, and elegance we must beat down such pretensions." *

Of Dr. Watts Johnson said that "he never wrote but for a good purpose." "His poems are by no means his best works; I cannot praise his poetry itself highly, but I can praise its design." He thought highly of Watts's Work on the Mind, and also of his Logic.

* Here is great injustice to Whitefield. We cannot find that Johnson ever took pains to hear this eminent preacher, though he was educated at the same University and the same College, and very nearly the same time. And all this naming Whitefield in the same connection with montebanks and circus-riders is as great and offensive an injustice as it is an unchristian and disgusting outrage. Garrick and Foote—as capable, at least, as Johnson of estimating true eloquence—heard him often and with admiration. Hume, with all his cool skepticism, pronounced him most eloquent. Chesterfield was overwhelmed with his power; while our own shrewd and clear-headed Franklin declared him the most skillful preacher existing. Such testimonies may be well esteemed as outweighing the mere speculations of one who had probably never listened to the great preacher, and who could never see much good in religion or politics outside of High Churchism and Toryism.

Speaking of *friendship* he says: "Always, sir, set a high value on spontaneous kindness. He whose inclination prompts him to cultivate your friendship of his own accord will love you more than one whom you have been at pains to attach to you."

On another occasion he talked of the advantage of keeping up the connections of relationship, "which," said he, "produce much kindness. Every man who comes into the world has need of friends. If he has to get them for himself, half his life is spent before his merit is known. Relations are a man's ready friends who support him. When a man is in real distress he flies into the arms of his relations."

Johnson does not seem to have always talked so sensibly on the subject of *love*. On one occasion he went so far as to insist that he is "commonly a weak man who marries for love;" to which sapient remark we must suppose that he deemed himself one of the exceptions when he married his beloved "Tetty," twenty years his senior.

Harmonious with the above sentiment seems the following conversation with Mr. Boswell:

Boswell. Do you not suppose that there are fifty women in the world with any one of whom a man may be as happy as with any one woman in particular?

Johnson. Ay, sir, fifty thousand.

B. Then, sir, you are not of opinion with some, who imagine that certain men and certain women are made for each other, and that they cannot be happy if they miss their counterparts?

J. To be sure not, sir. I believe that in general marriages would be as happy, and often more so, if they were all made by the Lord Chancellor upon a due consideration of the characters and circumstances, without the parties having any choice in the matter.

If such views appear extravagant, and well-nigh ridiculous, what follows sounds more sober and rational.

A lady, in conversation with Johnson, is de-

riding the novels of the day because their main burden is *love.* "We must not," replies Johnson, "ridicule a passion which he who never has felt never was happy, and he who laughs at never deserves to feel: a passion which has caused the change of empires and the loss of worlds: a passion which has inspired heroism and subdued avarice."

Johnson had but a slight taste for rural life. "No wise man," he tells Boswell, "will go to live in the country unless he has something to do that can be better done in the country. For instance, if he is to shut himself up for a year to study a science, it is better to look out to the fields than to an opposite wall. Then if a man walks out in the country there is nobody to keep him from walking in again. But if a man walk out in London he is not sure when he shall walk in again."

One day they are at Lord Bute's country-seat. When shown the botanical garden Johnson inquired, "Is not every garden a botanical garden?" Being told that there was a shrub-

bery to the extent of several miles, "That," says he, "is making a very foolish use of the ground; a little of it is very well." When it was proposed to walk on the pleasure-ground, "Don't let us fatigue ourselves," he said; "why should we walk there? Here is a fine tree; let's get to the top of it."

He discriminated thus between *labor* and *exercise:* "Labor is exercise continued to fatigue; exercise is labor used only while it produces pleasure."

Of keeping accounts he said: "Keeping accounts is of no use when a man is spending his own money, and has nobody to whom he is to account."*

We have before seen that Johnson disliked being questioned in conversation; and yet Boswell tells us that Dr. Johnson had "the happy art of instructing himself by making every man

* This suggests a characteristic declaration of the late Daniel Webster, who, being once in a company where the general subject of keeping accounts was under discussion, approached one of his friends and whispered, "I never did keep a set of books, and, by the help of God, I never will."

he meets tell him something of what he knows best." But how, it may be asked, did he make every man do this unless by some sort of *questioning?* And have we not been taught that, in conversation, pertinent inquiries addressed to one on a subject more familiar to him than to us—his profession or business, for example—is so far from being ill manners, that it is generally pleasing to the party thus inquired of?

Johnson, with more propriety, we think, hated long stories in conversation. A gentleman conversing with him was saying that certain persons at Shrewsbury were much annoyed with fleas. He occupied eight or ten minutes in his circumstantial relation; with abundance of words informed Johnson that large bales of woollen cloth were lodged in the town hall; that, by reason of this, fleas nestled there in prodigious numbers; that the lodgings of the persons alluded to were near the town hall; and that those little animals moved from place to place with wonderful agility, etc. Johnson

sat in great impatience till the gentleman had finished his tedious narrative, and then burst out,

"It is a pity, sir, that you have not seen a lion, for a flea has taken you such a time that a lion must have served you a twelvemonth."

Dr. Johnson was much offended at the idea of a man's mental faculties decaying by time. "It is not true, sir," he would say; "what a man could once do he would always do, unless, indeed, by dint of vicious indolence, and compliance with the nephews and nieces who crowd around an old fellow, and help to tuck him in, till he, contented with the exchange of fame for ease, even resolves to let them set the pillows at his back, and gives no further proof of his existence than just to suck the jelly that prolongs it."

Again he said: "There is a wicked inclination in most people to suppose an old man decayed in his intellects. If a young or middle aged man, when leaving a company, does not

recollect where he laid his hat, it is nothing. But if the same inattention is discovered in an old man, people will shrug up their shoulders and say, 'His memory is going.'"

THE END.

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